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# Adventure

## WAY OF THE LEGION
by GEORGES SURDEZ

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JUNE

ADVENTURE

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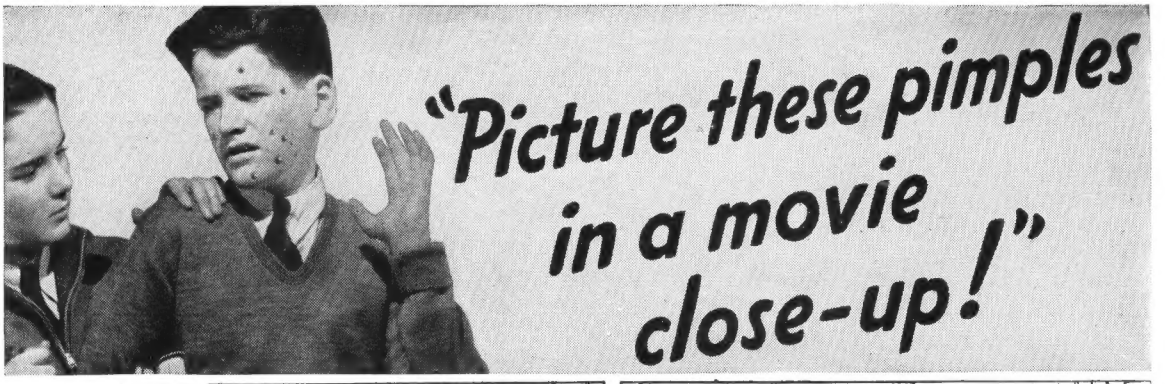


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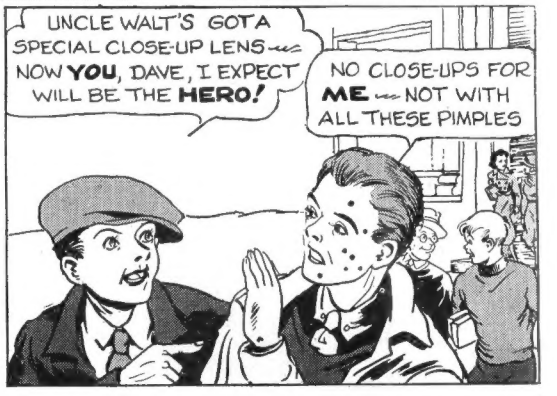


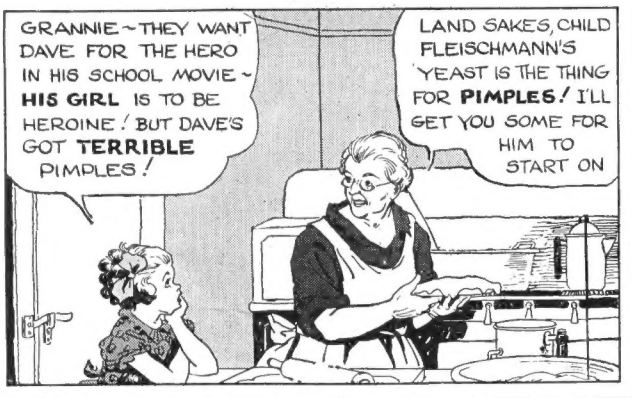
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# Adventure

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# WAY OF THE LEGION

## CHAPTER I

### LEGION STYLE

WHEN Lieutenant Norval reached Meknes, Morocco, after three months of convalescence in France, he reported to the colonel commanding the Second Foreign Regiment of Infantry. In the fall of the preceding year, while attached to the Fourth, he had been wounded in a skirmish on the Mauritanian fringe, which had earned him some praise and a citation for valor.

At his superior's gesture of invitation, he took a chair. He was young, dark of hair and his weatherbeaten face—he had spent his leave out of doors—glowed with confidence. Above average height, big of body and limbs, massive, he nevertheless gave an impression of spirited alertness.

"Cigarette?" The colonel's small, light blue eyes swept him with swift appreciation. "How old are you, Norval?"

"Twenty-three, *mon colonel.*"

"Nice age," the older man sighed. He

## A Novelette by GEORGES SURDEZ

was silent for a moment, then resumed suddenly: "I'm assigning you to Dar-Sourrak, a principal post in the Middle Atlas. You've heard of it? What have you to say?"

"As you order, Colonel," Norval replied calmly.

His face did not change expression, but he refrained a shrug, for he understood his chief's vague embarrassment: Dar-Sourrak had a definite reputation. However, he was a soldier, and could not protest nor argue.

"You understand that the place cannot be properly termed a pleasure resort? But in the service, we all must accept things as they come. Let us forget age and rank and so on for a minute and chat like friends, eh?"

The young man nodded, with the uncomfortable knowledge that this did not predict good news, and listened: "Dar-Sourrak, in itself, is no better and no worse than any large post in the hills. But there is Captain Lavigne. He is a very old personal friend, a fine man, an

astonishing Legionnaire, a hero. Nevertheless, we are forced to confess that he is a bit peculiar. You must have heard."

"Yes, Colonel!"

Captain Lavigne was so famous in the Foreign Legion for his peculiarities that many of the young officers who joined the Corps at first believed him to be a mythical character, created as a convenient figure for all the ancient, fantastic legends. Even his physical description smacked of pure invention: A sort of Don Quixote in khaki, an elongated, bony chap, wearing extremely long and thick mustaches, glaring through mobile green eyes, sporting a colossal nose that was red at the tip for the best motive in the world!

A man risen from the ranks, with more than thirty years in the Foreign Legion, a bellowing, stentorian martinet! He was a favorite of the white-pelted veterans, long since retired, who crowd the pubs of North Africa: "Lavigne? Do I know Lavigne? Say, I remember him in Siam—or in the Tonkin—or in Gerryville when that place was considered Saharan frontier—he was a corporal in my company—well—one day—" Others, chevroned chaps on the verge of pension, would fix a date: "Let's see—that happened after the Dardanelles campaign, the year that Lavigne became captain—"

"He is peculiar," the colonel repeated. "But as he is reaching the age limit in a few months, we all have at heart to avoid trouble and allow him to retire in comfort. We purposely placed him in the hills, despite his age, because he starts rows with the civic authorities in towns. He's an old Legionnaire. You see?"

Norval agreed silently.

Professional soldiers are the most sentimental of men, and the Legion observes the cult of the past, of traditions. Consequently, after twenty-five to thirty years of service, old Legionnaires become, in their own estimation, the representatives of vanished glory, demigods. Norval had encountered elderly soldiers, pompous veterans, self-appointed mentors of young chiefs, who had driven him to the edge of madness with constant bickerings and hair-splittings, based on sedulous knowledge of their rights and privileges, real or fancied. To command them had been a trial, to serve under one of them might prove torment.

"Are you at all familiar with his record?" The colonel asked, caressing his clipped mustache with one hand. "It's worth repeating briefly:

"He enlisted in the Legion at eighteen, a strong, almost illiterate youth. He was a corporal at twenty, a sergeant at twenty-two. Served everywhere, won every chevron, every stripe, with bayonet or sword. Algeria, Sahara, Tonkin, Morocco, Dardanelles, Western Front, Salonika, Syria. Wounded six times, twice very seriously.

"Captain Lavigne has had the diseases and accidents of army life in the colonies. Dysentery here, malarial fevers elsewhere; sunstroke, gastric ailments, anything and everything you can name. From eating all kinds of food, cooked or raw, from sleeping any place where the opportunity offered, drinking the water available. And to be fair, drinking other fluids in considerable quantities, from absinthe, through *choum*, anisette and *oozo* to Pernod and unbranded alcohol. Probably has a liver like a paving block and kidneys like rotting sponges.

"Many of us are in that same plight. But of late, Captain Lavigne's mind has not been as clear as it might be. He suffers a bit from what we may term persecution mania. For instance, he has aspired to the rank of officer in the Legion of Honor for ten years, and looks for the jealousy of civilians toward old army men as the motive for his failure to get it. Matter of fact, how can we go on asking the *rosette* of officer for a gentleman who gets into the most deplorable scrapes and scandals whenever he gets the chance? You see?"

"Yes, Colonel," Norval agreed, hiding his impatience.

He had heard that Captain Lavigne despised anything modern with maniacal intensity, firmly believed that the Legion was drifting from traditions, that Legionnaires were growing too soft. He was reputed to consider as alarming symptoms of decay the wearing of British-cut uniforms, cross belts, patch-pockets on tunics. There were numerous tales to illustrate this phobia: Once, upon arriving at a Saharan outpost, he had flown into a rage at the sight of a tennis court, had ordered it plowed under, sodded and used for a vegetable garden!

"This prancing about on hard cement," he had written in an official report when explanations had been asked of him, "must be pernicious to ankles and knees. Moreover, such games absorb and misdirect energy better employed for service. Carrots and onions will be more healthful for my Legionnaires, I dare to state, than cavorting about like ballet girls."

The colonel had paused to light another cigarette.

"We have had difficulties with lieutenants assigned to Dar-Sourrak. But you have an excellent record, so he cannot claim that we're getting rid of you on him—and you're a military academy officer, too, something he secretly respects. And at the same time what he calls a two-fisted guy—" the gray mustache lifted in a grin as the colonel repeated: "*un type à poigne,* as he says. We count on you to advise him a bit, in a diplomatic way."

Norval had strong doubts that his advice would be invited or welcome, but he agreed automatically: "I'll do my best, Colonel."

Dar-Sourrak was far in the hills, in recently conquered territory.

The bastioned walls crested a high hill, and the brown huts of a sizable native village huddled some distance down the slope. When they reached the gate, Norval was pleasantly surprised. He could see that the place was well tended. The sentry, a gigantic blond Legionnaire, a German, presented arms.

"The guard!"

Other Legionnaires appeared as if by magic from a low building flanking the gateway. Rifle-straps creaked as the guns were flung up to the salute; bayonets glittered, rigid streaks of steely light in the sun. A sergeant stepped forward, tunic buttoned snugly, a handsome, dapper soldier, who wore an automatic pistol in the holster at his belt. He also was up to the highest standards.

"Lieutenant Norval, assigned to—"

"The captain is expecting you, Lieutenant. Your car was reported. I'm Sergeant Motinski—" the noncom accepted the hand offered, then stepped back and saluted again: "If the Lieutenant will be pleased to follow me?"

"By all means. Carry on, Sergeant."

Matinski assigned a man to carry the baggage, led the way across the yard. It was level, the sand raked and smooth, without an empty tin, a scrap of paper, or a cigarette butt anywhere in sight. The lime on the walls of barracks, stables and sheds was fresh, white. The lettered signs over the doors were somewhat more ornate than customary, bearing carefully painted emblems

A section drilling in a corner of the spacious enclosure moved with striking precision and snap: Legion style.

Motinski walked erect, shoulders back. But the young officer thought he discerned a glint of irony, of humor in his eyes.

"You're a Pole, Sergeant?"

"Yes, Lieutenant."

The tone was respectfully, but distant; only the necessary words were uttered. This was discipline again. Through force of habit, Norval fell into step with his companion, and the two marched on in silence. Orderlies, who had been loafing

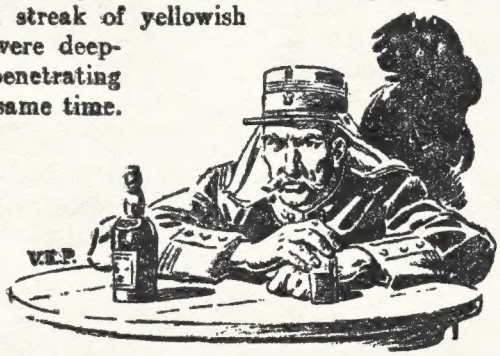
in the shade near the officers' quarters, sprang to attention.

"I'll inform the captain that you are here, Lieutenant."

The sergeant opened a door, saluted, reported. Then Norval stepped forward, entered the captain's office. There were two native flintlock rifles hung on the walls, a few framed photographs, plain furniture, an atmosphere of Spartan simplicity. The sun-screens had been propped up; light flooded in.

"Lieutenant Norval, Captain."

A man came to greet him, a tall, spare chap with bushy gray hair and a seamed, tanned face, slashed by the famous mustache, a broad streak of yellowish white. The eyes were deep-set, magnificent, penetrating and gentle at the same time. At one time, when the muscles of healthy youth had covered those broad shoulders, the captain must have been an imposing figure.



"No ceremony between us, my young colleague," Lavigne said. His voice was warm, vibrant, his hand-clasp strong. Norval, who had expected something quite different, was taken aback. This man was cordial, behaved like a gentleman. "Had a good trip? Those damned cars shake one all to pieces, eh? Thirsty, of course?"

"Very thirsty, *mon capitaine.*"

"I trust you're not one of those new officers who subsist on milk or water?" At the question, Norval hesitated: He wanted a long drink of water. But he shook his head and Lavigne beamed: "I thought not! Hebner, the bottles!" An orderly appeared, a middle-aged Legionnaire, evidently a German. He carried a tray bearing a tall green bottle, the neck of which was swathed in silver foil, and a huge earthen water jug. "Set that down, Hebner, and you may go, You too, Sergeant. Norval, make yourself comfortable. Better take a cigar. They seem strong at first, but they're healthier than inhaling paper ashes, in the long run."

The captain was filling two big tumblers. Norval's eyes stared when he saw the dose of absinthe meant for him. Those were men's drinks, Legionnaires' portions! But he did not protest, partly because it might have annoyed his new chief, partly through pride. He touched the captain's glass with his own, matched his performance swallow for swallow.

"I know all about you," Lavigne resumed, pulling at one end of his springy mustache, bringing it three inches from his cheek. When he released it, it snapped back with a curiously elastic effect: "I looked you up. Related to Major Norval, whom I knew in the Tonkin, twenty-three years ago?"

"My uncle, Captain. Retired after the War."

"Here's to him!" They drained the glasses again and Lavigne filled them for the third time. He considered Norval with affection: "Shaking in your boots, eh? That old brute of a Lavigne, what? Nonsense, just an old Legionnaire, running things Legion style. The colonel writes me you're a splendid chap, without nonsense in your system. I hope you are. My last lieutenant was a fop—had a gramophone and practiced the tango by the hour, alone in his quarters—a lieutenant of the Legion!"

Norval was feeling the drinks, and laughed in turn, although definite sympathy stirred in him for the lonely fellow

who had been forced back on his own resources for amusement.

"No kidding, Captain?"

"Quite seriously. I saw him from the guard-path on the walls. Sometimes he'd use a chair for a partner; sometimes he'd dance by himself, snapping his fingers. But your glass is empty—"

"Thanks, Captain."

Norval felt the drinks. It was as if the absinthe were seeping into his joints. But Lavigne continued the conversation, considering his new colleague with humorous speculation that concealed a streak of genuine cruelty. As for him, alcohol seemed to have no effect.

"Motinski will show you to your quarters," the captain concluded at last: "Join me for a few drinks before dinner, eh?"

Outside, the heat and glare struck Norval like a physical impact; his mind felt detached from his body. The effort to walk steadily brought sweat dripping down his face. Motinski directed the Legionnaires who brought the luggage, avoiding asking questions after hearing his chief's thick answers.

"That's all right," he dismissed the men. Then he turned toward Norval, his face perfectly composed, but the gleam of amusement in his eyes more evident than before: "I'll retire, with your permission, Lieutenant. Doubtless you wish to rest before dinner."

Norval nodded, and sank on the cot as soon as he was alone. He was furious at himself, at the captain who had deliberately placed him at a disadvantage from the start.

AT first, Norval noted little surface difference between the routine at Dar-Sourrak and what he had known in other hill stations. Perhaps the minor outward manifestations of discipline were more scrupulously observed.

The sole evidence of Lavigne's reported peculiarities was that part of the drill time was devoted to the teaching of the old manual of arms, the forming of squads, marching in columns by fours instead of by combat groups three men abreast. But even this was covered by Lavigne's statement that he intended to enter the company in a pageant, sometime, to show just what the pre-War Legion had looked like. Norval and the others might suspect that the captain was reliving old times, using the men for his own amusement. But the excuse was legitimate.

Norval thought at first that instruction in automatic rifle work and grenade throwing was being neglected. However, the senior-sergeant, a robust, taciturn Alsatian called Hauffen, quietly informed him that he attended to that outside post limits. It seemed that Lavigne entertained a prejudice against automatic weapons, believed that they caused the men to rely too much on rapid fire that consequently they were less confident of themselves when it came to close quarters.

Vitrier was a dour, wiry chap, who swung a perfectly round, tomato-red face at the end of a stringy neck. He did not converse with Lavigne, but for that matter seldom spoke to Norval. The meals were gloomy periods. Lavigne swore that the cook he had selected was an artist. But Norval had tasted better, if often worse. The captain monologued, the lieutenant approved, and the sub-lieutenant slid astonishing quantities of wine down his throat.

The majority of the men were seasoned Legionnaires, and they showed fine spirit. One unusual rule prevailed in the company: Lavigne had ordained that no one would be sent to Meknes for court-martial or punishment, that no one would be slated for the disciplinary company. He impressed upon Norval, very early, that discipline must be maintained within the formation, that everyone, from captain down to corporals, must assert his authority through personal prestige

if possible, by physical methods otherwise.

If a corporal or sergeant had the misfortune to follow the regulations and report a man for punishment, the captain would summon him, point at his sleeves and bark:

"What's that?"

"That? Oh, chevrons, Captain."

"If you can't exact respect for them, turn them in and go back to the ranks. Dismissed."

Thus the superior had to handle the culprit in the only fashion left him: Challenge him to a man to man encounter. If he happened to be licked, the chevrons went to the winner. But the loser was not transferred, as was the custom elsewhere—he remained and endured!

On occasions, when the offence to a corporal had been public, the captain would order the fight held openly. Natural human pride came into play, and Norval had to admit that he had never seen an outfit in which combative spirit was so strong.

Lavigne was reputed just and no respecter of persons with one exception: Hebner, his orderly, was taboo. He had been in the captain's personal service eight years, and considered himself the chief of all orderlies. Without consulting the lieutenant, he chose a servant for Norval, coached the man a while with cuffs and kicks, and really perfected him in the small but important details of his calling.

Aside from an annoying, fatherly habit of making long-winded speeches of advice, Lavigne appeared rather kindly to Norval, who was beginning to wonder how the captain had acquired his reputation as an unbearable autocrat, when the first pay day arrived. It proved a revelation.

Of course, hard drinking and carousing are ritual on pay day in the Foreign Legion; and even in large cities, the civilian police is withdrawn from the reserved quarter and military patrols sent in. But the fear of punishment exists—while the Legionnaires at Dar-Sarrouk knew that their captain would side with them and be deaf to any complaint.

By dusk, the men off duty had trooped down to the village—Lavigne permitted no civilian traders within the enclosure—and the orgy had started. An hour after dark, the first patrol returned with those already beyond self-control. Drawn by the clamor, Norval walked down the slope to see for himself. By that time, there were not more than a hundred Legionnaires in the little town, but they were making as much noise as five hundred.

Those natives not engaged in trade, with the philosophy of primitive people, had retired into their dwellings and barred their doors. The two pubs kept by Levantines were cores of turmoil. In a side street, a gang of drunken soldiers had entrenched themselves in a shabby *lupanar* and their less fortunate comrades were storming the place, under a bombardment of bricks and empty bottles. To obtain light to work by, they had commandeered the automobile of a local native trader and turned the headlights on the gate. The owner was held back by two sober Legionnaires, members of the police patrol, and a sergeant explained matters to Norval:

"Nothing to worry about, Lieutenant. It's happened before. The captain will arrange things. If I were you—"

Norval took the hint and returned to the military post. But he was irritated to find himself helpless. There should be a limit to enjoyment, even for Legionnaires.

At the mess table, both Lavigne and Vitrier drank heavily, and broke their usual feud, starting an obscure, surly conversation, with references to events and people unknown to the younger man. Hebner was very drunk, and insisted upon dumping second helpings on the

plates. Norval left the table as soon as he could, but did not escape the prevailing confusion. Men were returning, some by themselves, others under escort, to slump on their cots or to be shoved in the lockup. Norval did not know which amazed him the most, the drunkenness of those celebrating, or the soberness of those on duty.

For the amazing thing was that through the tumult and struggle there reigned a definite orderliness, as if the affair had been rehearsed and the participants were playing roles. It was like a series of living tableaux bearing the title 'Pay night in a Legion outpost!'

He turned in at midnight, when Vitrier took charge. He was tired and somewhat disgusted. Hauffen had warned him quietly that it would be useless to take the names of the more turbulent: Lavigne would forgive them all *en masse*.

He had scarcely fallen asleep when Marsen, his orderly, awoke him:

"Lieutenant—everybody up! Checking the roll!"

It seemed that everyone had to be present at this ceremony. Captain Lavigne, belted, shaved, wearing the badges of his decorations, led the way to the barracks, the stables, the baker's shack, the lockup—where the inmates howled at being disturbed—and did not miss a single sentry behind a single supply-shed. He strutted, nodded, approved, blamed, flew into quick, transitory rages.

"Two days' confinement—four days' cell—" evidently, the rule against punishment did not hold tonight: "This room is like a sty—corporal must be punished—that barrel should have a lid, who's responsible? Take his name, four days, the swine—" Lavigne spoke fluently, showed no trace of drunkenness, save for the constant quivering of mustache and hands: "Sergeant, your tunic's not properly fastened. You're sloppy! Call yourself a Legionnaire? Two days—"

Vitrier was bored, sleepy. Norval pitied the poor privates, sodden and bleary-eyed, already prey to terrific hangovers, many of them with bruised noses, blackened eyes, puffed lips, submitted to the jolting and prodding of the tough old captain. Lavigne appeared to take a sadistic delight in forcing the weakest to answer questions.

He was relieved when it was over, and returned to his blankets with a sigh of happiness. He plunged into sleep as a man falls off a cliff.

He was awakened soon after by the shriek of a bugle in the yard. He dressed hastily, and raced to his assigned combat station. For the moment, he was sure that the natives had taken advantage of the disturbance to make a surprise attack. But when he reached the Bastion Number Two, buckling his garrison belt as he trotted, Captain Lavigne was waiting for him.

"Lieutenant, let me see your service revolver—"

Puzzled, half afraid, Norval handed the weapon over, butt first, very timidly. Lavigne snatched it, pushed the catch with his thumb, snapped the cylinder loose, looked at the chambers.

"Properly loaded, all right—" He returned the gun, crossed the platform to the first position machine-gun, tapped the sergeant on the shoulder, "How many rockets? Right—" Lavigne counted them to check up: "Everything in order. Fire a Very light."

The man obeyed, lifted the heavy pistol and pulled the trigger. A long, fiery streak was stenciled across the starry sky. It bloomed into intense blue-white light, drifted down, swaying on the parachute, flooding the desert slopes with a brilliant glare.

"Number Four—fire!" Lavigne called stridently.

A machine gun thundered into the night from the north-eastern bastion, spitting flames. Five shots, then three, then five more, before the captain called a halt. Lavigne then touched Norval's

shoulder, as a signal to escort him, and crossed the yard toward the gun.

The gunner had outguessed him and had already replaced the thirteen cartridges in the long metal magazine holding twenty-five. But he did not escape unscathed, because he had forgotten to adjust the tubular gadget which concealed the flames of the explosions. Lavigne lectured him, pointed out that in actual service he would have been slain by return fire.

"Dismissed!" he ordered at last.

There was another alarm just before dawn, and the same performance was repeated. And at six, Norval had to rise for the day, to take a section out for drill.

Norval was beginning to detest the captain, who was responsible for his throbbing head and aching limbs. No man should be expected to stand this very long.

THE day passed eventlessly, but dusk started fresh trouble. The effect of the drink was wearing off, and the dreaded *cafard,* which is morbid brooding and homesickness mixed with a longing for violence, made its appearance. A Legionnaire tried to shoot himself, and had to be tied up by his comrades pending a change of mind.

Then Lavigne discovered that his private stock had lost two bottles, and he fired Hebner. Vitrier broke his silence to advise Norval not to plead his cause. "Happens four or five times a year, you know. You'll see more of this monkey business before long—"

He was right. Hebner, who had undoubtedly drunk the bottles himself, pretended to seek the culprit who had lost him his job and the esteem of his beloved chief. He entered one of the long, shed-like barrack rooms, which emptied at the sight of the captain's revolver flourished high in the air.

"Who did it? I'll kill the swine. I'll spill his brains on his shirt!"

He fired several shots into the walls, screamed, cursed. Sergeant Motinski stopped Norval as he was going into the room: "I wouldn't, Lieutenant! That oaf might shoot you; and anyway, captain's orders are to call him when Hebner goes wild."

Lavigne appeared, walking leisurely, a cigar between his teeth, in trousers, slippers and shirt. He halted at the door and called:

"I'm coming, Hebner."

"I'll shoot!"

Nevertheless, the captain entered, unhurriedly. Norval noticed that the Legionnaires around him were tense, although they grinned. They knew, as he did, that his often repeated, highly comical situation might become a scandalous tragedy with the twitching of a finger. For Hebner was sincere enough, desperate, as he took himself and his job most seriously.

Lavigne walked up to him slowly, until he was near enough to tear the revolver from the quivering hand. Then he knocked the orderly down with a backhand blow, hoisted him to his feet with a powerful grip, and assisted his flight with vigorous kicks on the seat of the trousers.

"How do you like this, you slob? You'll brandish guns and yell? And this? Son of your mother, disgusting individual, perverted liquor thief!"

Completely demoralized by this attack from the rear, Hebner scuttled across the yard. Captain Lavigne halted near Norval, retrieved his slipper, flung loose during the performance, panting, half-amused, half-angry.

"Doesn't meet with your ideas of dignity, eh, my young friend?"

Norval realized that some of his feelings had reflected on his face. While he did not lack a sense of humor, he considered playing with guns a poor pastime for adults as well as children. And he

was weary of sharing the prevailing tolerance toward the fantastic episodes occurring within the Post.

"As long as you ask me, no, Captain."

Lavigne's eyes narrowed.

"I had to do something. You know what he'd get if I slated him for court-martial? Threatening a superior, gun in hand?"

"Two to eight years in the pen, Captain."

"You see? In the long run, a boot properly applied works out better than a trial. That's what too many have forgotten in the Legion."

The incident was closed. The bullet holes were plugged; Hebner was back on his old job by morning, penitent and awkwardly attentive. But Lavigne, who until then had shown a certain gruff affection for Norval, became aloof, surly. He picked flaws in the lieutenant's system, started a nerve-shattering campaign of bickering.

Oddly, this attitude was immediately reflected by others. The men made it plain that their sympathy was with the captain. They granted that he was not wholly normal, but in the Corps, it is not necessarily a bad thing for an officer to be reputed somewhat *cinglé*, a bit of a nut. Before long, Norval had to admit the evidence: The Legionnaires no longer liked him.

And he could not console himself by saying they were poor soldiers, who were loyal to a man who cajoled them. Lavigne was far harsher, much less considerate than he was. Between a madman and a sane officer, they chose the first—Norval did not understand them.

## CHAPTER II

### NO HELP NEEDED

AN attack by a band of native prowlers upon a fatigue party bringing in building stone, broke the monotony. Norval led a section out the moment the shots were heard, and was lucky enough to catch sight of the fleeing Chleuhs and to kill three of them.

When composing his report of this skirmish, he suggested that a sergeant who had brought in a wounded private should be cited. The captain called him into his office, indicated the sheaf of papers:

"I would suggest rewriting this with less style and drama and some additional technical information. By the way, I'm not letting that citation through. That sergeant merely did his duty, and men are spoiled when they are showered with medals and crosses at the least excuse. In my days, it took something to win a medal. Why, in my first company, only four men had more than ordinary campaign badges!"

Norval had an answer ready, on the tip of his tongue. What these elderly tenders of the sacred fire, these keepers of the torch, too often forgot was that conditions had changed, that Legionnaires saw more action, harder fighting and consequently deserved more rewards. The young lieutenant knew that the Legion had suffered more fatal casualties in Morocco during his two years of service than the entire Corps had lost, in every colony, in the decade between 1900 and 1910. But it would not be tactful to remind Lavigne of such facts.

"It will merely appear to the sergeant, Captain, that he is being unjustly treated. Others have been cited."

"A cross here," Lavigne grumbled, "a medal there. And I, who became a Knight of the Legion of Honor fourteen years ago, I am still waiting for the *rosette* of officer."

That was his real grievance. He did not remember that he had lost a chance once for striking a civilian with a cane, another time for a drunken brawl in the Fez reserved quarter.

"One injustice never mends another," the lieutenant insisted.

Lavigne glared at him: "I order you

to change that report, do you hear? I know the game you're playing, why you were sent here; but may I remind you that I am still a captain, whether that Meknes gang likes it or not? And that I shall be a major? And that I shall get the *rosette?* And that I don't need the first jackanape that comes along to teach me my business?"

"As you order, Captain."

"I'm pleased to hear that! You may go."

Dar-Sourrak was settling back into normal routine after another pay day, when Lavigne sent for Norval and handed him a telegram just received from the battalion commander. The captain was asked to show all courtesy and assistance to two gentlemen, civilians, who were on their way to the Post by motor. Their names and their purposes were not stated.

"Probably a brace of minor politicians from France," Lavigne said bitterly. "We get them once in a while, traveling at Government expenses on some vague investigation or other.

"I don't want to receive them, for I always find it hard to be polite to those gabby meddlers. Their blunders have killed more Frenchmen than the Prussian Guard."

"What shall I say if they ask for you?" Norval wondered.

"That I am away. I'll go hunting with Hebner. Entertain the fools, give them lunch, let them nose about, answer their foolish questions. As for me, I'd say the wrong things, I always do with that ilk. All the contact I want with civilians, my young friend, is with the sole of my boot."

"Captain—" Norval hesitated: "I wonder if you should go out with only one companion. You might be ambushed."

"Nonsense. You know the native protection riders will be out on the trails to guard the passage for that car. And since you bagged a few of them, the slobs have not been hanging about so much."

The captain looked at Norval with irony: "No, no hope of an ambush."

HE had been gone less than an hour when the motor car was reported in sight by the lookout on the mirador. A short time later, the automobile was at the gate, and Norval, wearing a freshly pressed uniform and decorations, stepped forward to greet two men and saw at once that the captain had guessed wrongly and that these were not politicians.

One was a short, slight man of fifty, clad in a dusty dark suit and wearing a derby hat, an incongruous rig in the Atlas. The other, large and tall, with big shoulders and a ruddy face, was obviously a policeman in plain-clothes. He was the one who spoke first, after an amused glance at the section of Legionnaires drawn up by the gateway, ready to grant them military honors.

"I'm Special-Commissioner Gregoire, from Casablanca. And this is Inspector Caucher, of the Paris *Sureté-Générale.* You may dismiss your men, Lieutenant. We're here on business. Sorry, too, because I know how you people feel about your men."

Norval led the way to the office, dismissed the curious clerks.

"Well, gentlemen?"

"Inspector Caucher will explain."

The little detective unbuttoned his black coat, produced a number of papers, some in tattered envelopes, others new and bearing official rubber-stamped legends. He handed Norval a photograph.

"Do you know this man? Allow for four or five years, perhaps a different cut of hair, the removal of the mustache: Height, one meter seventy-two, weight about seventy-five kilogs, light brown hair, gray-blue eyes, tattooed on arms and chest—"

Gregoire intervened: "No need to fence with the lieutenant, Inspector. The man does not deserve shelter, he is an assassin. And we know he is here."

Inspector Caucher lighted a cigarette, nodded.

"I'll make it clear in a few words. Real name is Samuel Lyddel. Born in England, but brought up on the continent. Parents were music-hall and circus performers, acrobats. Followed the same trade as a youth. Enlisted in the British Army during the War, excellent record. Without definite profession when demobilized, he became a hotel thief, working oftenest in the palatial hotels along the Azure Coast. Arrested several times, served two short sentences. Released, deported to England. Sneaked back into France. While robbing a private apartment at Nice, awoke the occupant, an elderly Hungarian lady. She did not remain awake long enough to scream.

"We immediately recognized Lyddel's method of breaking-in, and knew he was guilty when we failed to locate him. We investigated enlistments in the Legion, as usual, but he must have waited some time before risking it. Because he is here, we have the warrants, papers, everything legally needed. His name is Valentin Bepaul—"

"How do you know that?" Norval wondered, returning the photograph.

"He wrote to a cousin in Australia to send him money, general delivery, Meknes, Morocco, as he expected to be there on leave some time before summer. Intended to desert. The cousin wrote other relatives still in England, and the British passed the tip on to us."

There was nothing that Norval could do to protect the man, had he desired to. The Legion asks no questions, and will harbor men convicted of political crimes, but common felons are surrendered when claimed. The lieutenant had seen men taken away by the police more than once. He did not like the spectacle, but law was law.*

"Orderly!" he called. When the private appeared, he gave him orders: "Tell Sergeant Hauffen to escort Second-Class Legionnaire Bepaul to this office at once." He turned to Caucher. "You'll have him here in a few minutes."

"Good." The little man laughed. "He is one man who will never be sent back here to conclude his five years. Robbery and murder, twenty years to life. I've been after him for years, so you can imagine that this is a moment!"

Sergeant Hauffen entered, ignored the visitors, saluted.

"Legionnaire Depaul is with the patrol protecting the wood fatigue, Lieutenant."

"Send him in when he returns."

"When will that be?" Gregoire asked.

"Around four-thirty."

"We've been advised to return before night. Could you have him brought in?"

Norval recalled that Captain Lavigne would return by mid-afternoon, and would be displeased at the sight of policemen. It would be best to have everything over with before he showed up. This appeared to be one of the occasions foreseen by the colonel, when tact counted.

"Sergeant, send up the recall signal," he ordered.

"As you order, Lieutenant." Hauffen left.

"Meanwhile, we can have lunch," Norval suggested.

In the mess-room, Vitrier greeted the guest in surly fashion, bolted his meal and departed. He had no use for cops. Caucher proved an excellent speaker, and told of other long trips he had taken after culprits. He narrated how he had coaxed a suspect from Soviet Russia across the Polish border, where he could be arrested.

"Do you know," he concluded, "that I felt like crying? I had pretended to be his friend so long that I had grown to like him. Nine times out of ten, when you are with a man, even a murderer, for a long time, you feel like letting him go."

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*See Camp-fire Note.

Sergeant Hauffen appeared.

"Patrol's in, Lieutenant. Legionnaire Depaul is outside."

"Bring him in."

There were ten seconds of anguished expectation. Then Depaul entered. He was a man above medium-height, wiry, with a clean shaven, rather sensitive and intellectual face. He wore the Cross with two bronze stars and the Colonial Medal. Norval liked him, and had recently slated him for corporal. The Legionnaire joined his heels, saluted his superior; then his glance reached the civilians.

His expression underwent a change, as he realized the situation. It was as if his features were made of wax, so completely did they alter from the soldierly calm he had first shown. For an instant, Norval felt that he was about to yield to panic, to make a foolish plunge for the door.

But he had guts, had a grip on himself in two seconds, and sought desperately to bluff it out. As was his duty, he waited to be addressed. Norval's voice was hoarse when he spoke.

"These gentlemen believe they know you, Legionnaire."

"Ah? I've never seen them before, Lieutenant," Depaul said.

"Hello, Lyddel," Caucher rose, smiling.

"I don't understand. My name's—"

"Strange, strange," Caucher murmured with clumsy sarcasm that irked Norval. "Now, when Lyddel was a private in the Warwicks, he had the badge of that illustrious regiment tattooed on his forearm. Pending a comparison of fingerprints, would you mind rolling up your left sleeve. If the badge isn't there, I'll give you a thousand francs."

"All right, I'm Lyddel," the Legionnaire admitted. "Lieutenant, may I speak to you a moment?"

"I'm afraid I cannot help you—"

"I know that—" The soldier smiled faintly: "But I want you to know that I just tried to keep the old dame from screaming. I didn't know how weak she was. All of a sudden, there she was, out, with her skinny neck between my hands. I hadn't even squeezed. I'm a thief, Lieutenant, but I never meant to kill."

Caucher tapped him on the shoulder, in mock sympathy. Norval could have punched him for the satisfaction glowing on his face.

"Don't grieve, Lyddel. We all understand it was a professional accident. Your head is not in danger. The doctors reported her physical condition as partially responsible for her death." The detective caught Norval's expression and went on more amiably: "Your fine conduct in action, both with the British Army and out here, won't do you any harm. And think of the nice trip we'll have together, all the way to Nice! Lieutenant, I'll sign the necessary papers—" he laughed: "For I suppose I have to give you a receipt: 'One Legionnaire, in good condition'—"

"Get it over with, please," Norval cut him short.

Caucher unscrewed the top of his fountain pen, sat before the table, shoving aside plate and glass. He fumbled in his papers, found the proper blank and started to fill it out.

"What's going on in here?"

ALL turned. Captain Lavigne stood in the doorway. Behind him was Hebner, carrying a shotgun in his hands, a carbine slung from one shoulder, a bag of game from the other. The captain had roared his question, and everyone appeared petrified.

"Well, Norval, what's all this?" he repeated, staring from face to face: "I saw the recall signal rise from the bastion. Why were the men called back from work?"

Norval should have remembered that the smoke signal would be visible to the captain as well as the patrol! He tried to explain, but Gregoire, the Casablanca

police official, stepped forward, removing his hat.

"Allow me to—" he started.

"You're a dick, aren't you?" Lavigne challenged him scornfully.

"Yes, Captain, I'm a—"

"I don't talk to your kind. Lieutenant, please answer—"

Norval outlined the case. As he spoke, Lavigne's face grew purple; veins rose and knotted over his temples.

"So you were going to turn one of my Legionnaires over to the cops, eh? A good thing I came back in time—"

Gregoire, knowing Morocco and Legionnaires, understand what he coped with and was silent. But Caucher, fresh from France, was not cautious. He came forward in turn and sought to place papers in the captain's hand.

"This from the Nineteenth Army Corps, this from the Staff at Rabat, Morocco, which clearly shows that I am acting—"

Lavigne slapped the papers from his hand.

"Shut up!" he snapped.

"My duty, Captain—I must speak—"

"Oh," Lavigne repeated gently, "you must speak?" His voice swelled: "No one speaks here without my permission." He beckoned to Hebner, indicated Caucher: "If that runt opens his mouth to me again, shoot him."

"Sure, Captain," Hebner agreed with enthusiasm.

Caucher was too keen an observer not to see that the menace was not a joke. The orderly handled the shotgun hopefully. The policeman addressed Norval.

"Lieutenant, I must protest against this—"

One man appeared to enjoy the scene: Depaul-Lyddel, whose face was bathed in intense satisfaction. Norval felt that stark tragedy might spring suddenly out of this insane situation.

"Captain—" Unconsciously, he spoke in a wheedling tone, like an adult arguing with a sulky child: "You might get

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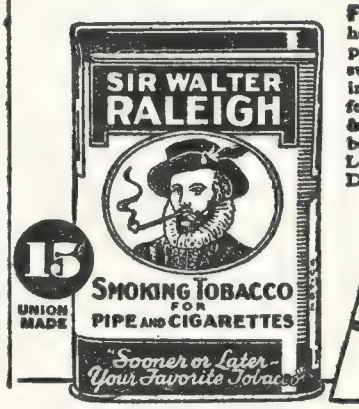


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the major on the telephone. He granted these gentlemen authority to—"

"I don't need anyone to tell me what to do," Lavigne growled. "This man is a Legionnaire and belongs in my company, that's all I have to know. I've been thirty-five years in the Legion and have yet to surrender one of my men to anybody. These *gentlemen*—" he stressed the word with heavy sarcasm, "can get into their car and go back. They can report my actions to whom they like. But I am, for the moment, out of patience. Sergeant Hauffen!"

"Captain?"

"You will order a group to arm." Lacigne consulted his watch: "It is now three-ten. If at three-fifteen they are not outside the gate, expel them by force."

Hauffen saluted: "Very well, Captain."

"Now, I am not detaining you any longer." Lavigne grinned. "Good-by, good luck. And consider yourselves lucky that I did not massage your buttocks with my boot." Gregoire shrugged, nodded to Caucher, and they left. Norval was about to follow them when the captain halted him: "Hauffen will show them the way. There is no need to apologize for me."

"But Depaul will have to be given up, Captain."

"Oh, no—" Lavigne lighted a cigar. "Never took a man from my company, never will. Let them transfer him and then do as they like. But I can't have the men think I'm not behind them, any time, anywhere. An old principle in the Legion."

Norval knew that Lavigne had gone too far. In Morocco, comparatively recent realm of France, matters would be hushed, because civilians still depended on soldiers for protection. But Paris lacked the colonial viewpoint, and Lavigne would be tried—and convicted. It would mean prison instead of pension, after thirty-five years, for a maniac's belief in his own importance!

THE captain was called away from dinner that night to answer a telephone call from the major in Kasbah. It was a stormy conversation, parts of which, contributed by Lavigne, who had never learned to use the instrument naturally, could be overheard not only from the mess-room but from the yard, broken by long pauses when he was listening.

"I absolutely refuse to apologize—I said absolutely—in writing or verbally, you understand, Major—Very well, let them cable Paris and see if I'll be eaten alive—No, not even if I receive the order—matter of private concern, of personal dignity, you understand?—What—Yes, I will send the man if I receive notification of official transfer—Eh? I really do not give a damn. Good night, *mon commandant!*"

He returned, flushed and angry, drained a glass of wine in two gulps. Then he attacked a slice of tough beef, which the cook misnamed "Chateaubriand aux pommes", with vicious lunges of knife and fork.

"Never—" he grumbled between bites, "never happened in the old Legion. Radio, tanks, autos, detectives out here! What damned nonsense. Never heard of—"

Sub-Lieutenant Vitrier, who had been as silent as usual and had limited himself to short requests for second helpings, suddenly straightened, like a man who has endured much and has come to a decision to assert himself. He uttered firmly, clearly: "Saunier!"

"What?" Lavigne asked with irritation.

"Saunier, Legionnaire, Captain." Vitrier chuckled: "Taken from company stationed at Tizi-Maklouf, Saharan Territories, in June 1907. Convicted as a murderer in January 1908, guillotined in July. Absolute fact: Captain was named Laigue, now retired, address Oran. Sergeant Jules Lavigne, yourself, Captain, in charge of his escort as far as

Ain-Seffra, where the cops took him over."

"What does that prove?" Lavigne challenged.

"I state facts, Captain. I don't draw conclusions."

"Do so this time, as a favor to me, Vitrier. Draw a conclusion!"

"You claim it never happened before. It has. You forgot.'

"My patience has limits, Vitrier!"

"That's a threat, Captain, not a refutation."

That was the start of an argument which grew so heated that Norval motioned the orderlies to leave. Lavigne could not bear to be proved wrong. They flung names, dates, events, probably inventing some of them. Vitrier grew very dignified unexpectedly.

"Did you call me a liar, Captain?"

"Take it as you prefer."

"I'll be back." Vitrier rose, quivering.

"I'll not run away," Lavigne assured him.

Norval rushed after Vitrier and reached his room in time to block the doorway. The sub-lieutenant was returning with a revolver, an army thirty-eight.

"Don't butt in," he warned tensely: "Maybe I'll face a firing-squad for this, but I'll shut him up! According to him, nobody's ever done anything in the Legion except him. Well, he called me a liar and—"

Norval had no desire to appear before a court of enquiry. It was awkward to testify after one of those unexplained shootings that occur in outposts. After a few years, not many remembered who had been a witness or who had killed. It smeared a man's record with sinister scandal.

"Have some sense," he pleaded.

And when Vitrier shoved him aside, he grappled with him, locking his hand about the weapon, thumb over the hammer. The other was probably glad to have a vent for his anger, and struggled savagely, swearing at the top of his lungs. Despite his age, he was a mass of muscles, and no soft touch.

Nevertheless, Norval got the gun away from him, and held it out of reach, pushing Vitrier back with his left hand. The veteran made futile attempts to reach it.

Then Lavigne strode down the hallway, stepped between them and hurled them apart with a contemptuous grunt. Norval, panting, hid the weapon behind his back.

"Give him that gun!" the captain ordered. When Norval hesitated, he took the weapon and tossed it carelessly to the sub-lieutenant: "There you are, Vitrier. We'll settle it later." He deliberately turned his back on the armed man: "Now, young fellow," he addressed Norval, who was stupidly smoothing his ruffled hair: "I have a few words to say to you. I'm old enough to know what to do in any situation, and need no help. Had you kept your head, you would have noticed that I did not go for a weapon—because I knew that nothing would happen if only Vitrier had a gun. Did they teach you to shoot unarmed men in military school?"

"But, Captain, I thought—"

"You're doing too much thinking and acting like an ass. Ever since you've been here, you've been ready with unsolicited advice. You wish to teach your elders new tricks. First, you try to win favor with your subordinates with unmotivated citations. Then you surrender a Legionnaire to the cops—merely because they ask you!"

"They'll get him, anyway," Norval retorted. "It's the law."

"But what matters is that they won't get him from this company. I don't expect you to understand what the difference is. I have asked Headquarters for a Legion officer, but evidently, there are none left, because they've sent me the prettiest series of pedants I've ever seen! I believed you were intelligent at first. I've changed my mind. Do as the others

did, apply for transfer. I'll approve enthusiastically."

Norval looked at Vitrier for support. To his amazement, the sub-lieutenant appeared to approve what had been said. He exchanged glances with Lavigne, both grinned, and the captain slapped him on the shoulder.

"All right, *mon vieux!* You shoot me some other time, eh? Meanwhile, there's no reason why we shouldn't have a drink. Come on."

The two veterans went back to the mess-room side by side. Norval struggled for comprehension, then returned to his room, muttering curses. This was the end. He would not stand any more—he must ask for a transfer for the end of the month.

## CHAPTER III

### "OBEY AND DIE"

FORTUNATELY, the company was ordered to go to Kasbah-Tadla, where a column was concentrating. Dar-Sourrak was turned over to a detachment of Colonial Infantry, and the Legion started out. The distance that could be covered in three hours by motor car consumed three days of marching. Legionnaires are not pampered, and travel on foot. On the few occasions when they have been granted motor trucks, a number of them paid for the rides with their lives, for action waited at the end of the trips.

Captain Lavigne was a changed man. He marched every mile of the way, allowing Hebner to ride his big-boned, hammer-headed beast. He did not appear to have a worry on his mind; he whistled, joined in the choruses of marching songs with a voice that a witty Legionnaire termed "a privy-barytone," raucous, tuneless, but powerful.

He climbed into his saddle just outside Kasbah-Tadla, and led the sections into town to the martial blare of the bugles, and he was assigned a place in the vast camp of the expedition outside the little city. On the following day, the colonel drove in from Meknes, reviewed the battalion. He stopped before Lavigne's company, slapped the old chap on the back, paid him compliments.

That evening, there was a sort of informal banquet at the Military Club. And following the uncorking of cheap champagne, the officers who were to participate in the coming show gathered before the general commanding, who instructed his staff-colonel to outline the situation.

The affair would not last more than six weeks. A mere push southward, fifty or sixty kilometers beyond the occupied zone, having for objective the walled town of Roka-Menouar. Serious resistance could be expected at that spot, as the local Kaid believed himself something of a holy man and had committed himself to a valiant defense when various tribes had promised to send him selected warriors.

Lavigne had drained his glass as often as it was filled, and he spoke aloud several times, to state that the Legion would do the work, as always, and that other troops would get the rewards. The general leaned toward one of his aides: "Who is the phenomenon?" he asked. He smiled when he heard the name: "By Jove, almost prehistoric, isn't he? I heard of him when I served with D'Amade at the Dardanelles."

He asked that Lavigne be introduced to him, and as due to a local hero, turned out a neat, patriotic, military speech. Lavigne was touched, elated. He resumed drinking with moist eyes. And he looked at Norval as if to say: "Well, and what do you think of me? Good enough for generals—"

Norval was irritated. He had achieved what had been asked of him, remained in the company. And there was no sign that Lavigne would be removed. Moreover,

this was not the time to ask a transfer. A chance to see active service is never to be abandoned.

It was early in the afternoon of the following day when Lavigne plunged into the tent which Norval shared with Vitrier. Without a word of warning, he

grasped the lieutenant by the collar of his tunic, knotting his fingers in the cloth, and started to shake him back and forth, gesticulating with his free hand, snarling incoherent insults.

"Hypocrite—boot-licker—you damned spy!"

Norval tore himself free, lost his temper and shoved the captain back, shouting for explanations. Vitrier sat on an upended tin trunk, filling his pipe, and commented:

"Ah, the circus is here again!"

At last, Lavigne consented to reveal the cause of his rage. He flung a crumpled official order at Norval: He was instructed to leave for Meknes when the column started south, there to report at Hospital Louis to appear before the medical board, as a preliminary to being granted expiration of service furlough pending a decision on the amount of his pension.

"You see? Shelved, sacked, kicked out. And the company, my company, going to fight! The colonel compliments me, the general compliments me, but you don't like it! You sent reports behind my back, about Hebner, about Depaul—"

"On my word of honor, Captain, I did nothing of the kind!"

"Your word of honor!" Lavigne's tone was derisive.

"I do not permit you or anyone else to use that tone," Norval said. "Unless you calm down, I shall demand satisfaction."

"A duel, little one?" Lavigne scoffed. Norval took a step forward, and the older man looked at him steadily. "I'm not afraid of you, but I may be mistaken. Will you come to see the colonel with me? He's still in town. If necessary, I'll apologize."

"Agreed," Norval said.

THE interview was granted at once, probably because Lavigne shouted so loudly that it was best to let him have his way. Both the colonel and the major were present. And both appeared very embarrassed. But they assured Lavigne that Norval had not written a line that he had not seen and authorized.

The captain offered his hand to the young man: "Sorry."

"It's forgotten, Captain," Norval accepted. His opinion of the man went up, as he knew what it cost Lavigne to admit himself wrong in the least detail.

"Now, why am I being shelved?" the captain challenged. "Do you consider me unsuited for leadership?"

The colonel sought to evade, to placate, then grew impatient.

"It's best all around, Lavigne. There is a report about you at headquarters; an investigation is asked for. Some disagreement with the police, threats and insults, forwarded by the War Department at the suggestion of the Interior. If you are on leave, pending pension, the matter will be dropped. Or we hope so."

"They got their man from the battalion, didn't they?" Lavigne shouted. "What more do they want? And young Norval, right here, can tell you that they were trying to take a man away without consulting me—"

"Well, Norval?" the colonel pressed.

Norval had glanced at Lavigne with amazement: The old officer might be

considered insane, but he had been clever enough to find the one flaw in the situation that gave him a valid motive for his behavior: He could state, truthfully, that the detectives had been about to take a Legionnaire away without his knowledge.

"That's the truth, Colonel."

"You see?" Lavigne triumphed. "Did I have the right to resent their actions or not? Moreover, they never explained anything to me. I asked the lieutenant, didn't I, Norval?"

"Yes, Captain."

The colonel looked at Norval somewhat reproachfully. He knew the whole story, evidently; but the lieutenant's testimony, siding as it seemed with Lavigne, puzzled him. Of course, the captain's argument was a masterpiece of quibbling, a warping of events, but he had framed his questions so that they must be answered favorably.

"Yes, that gave you some justification, Lavigne," the colonel conceded. "Nevertheless, your health is not good—"

"I have just marched ninety kilometers, Colonel. So much for the legs. As for the arms—" Lavigne picked up a chair, a solid, military piece of furniture, and tore off one leg with a single effort: "Do you know many men who can do it?"

The colonel exchanged looks with the major, who did not appear to like the destruction of his office material. Norval was beginning to admire Lavigne, who was forcing the colonel to try another tack. The mark of a Legionnaire is the ability to get through any scrape. And the old captain had slipped through the net of arguments twice with grace and ease.

"You know, Lavigne, that the usual course is to grant leave before pension, a routine order. I think it will be more regular if you obey this one."

"I have nearly three months left, Colonel, and there will be fighting. I deserve a chance to obtain the rank of major and gain three years and a larger pension."

"Well, to be quite frank—" The colonel looked at Norval, hesitated, and Lavigne gestured that anything might be said before his second: "you have the reputation of being rash. We managed to keep that last affair quiet, but the general thought you had lost too many men, seven killed. We soldiers know that you made no mistake. However—"

"Do you hold me responsible?"

"No. One can't make an omelet without breaking eggs."

"And I was taking a chance of being one of the eggs broken, Colonel. I either was wrong, and should have been court-martialed, or right. It is pretty late to ask me for explanations as to why I lost four more than had been estimated for the job."

"Enough." The colonel cut short with a quick gesture, rising. "An order is an order. Obey."

Lavigne, until that moment, had been an extravagant, ludicrous figure. Suddenly, he reminded Norval of the change in Legionnaire Depaul's face when he had seen the policemen. There came the same swift alteration of expression. Lavigne was faced with the end of his career, and looked like a weary, broken, desperate old man.

"Colonel, I have obeyed always until now. For thirty-five years. I am begging for one more campaign. Obey? I will obey, as long as I am alive. I shall stay behind; I shall be humiliated. But when my company marches out of this town without me, I shall blow my brains out. My word as a Legionnaire, I shall blow my brains out!"

The colonel rose, grasped Lavigne's hand, gripped him around the shoulders with one arm: "We're all your friends, Lavigne. You would not do that. Such a threat is unworthy of a man such as you!"

"A man? A man who is shoved away when there is fighting to be done, a man you fear will kill off his men needlessly?"

Lavigne freed himself, stepped back, breathed deeply. "When the last man marches away and I am left behind, well—" He held a finger against his right temple, cocking his thumb like a pistol hammer: "Bang!"

Perhaps sensing that he had made an impression, he drew up to attention, saluted—and strode out.

"He'll do it!" the major declared.

"I know it," the colonel grumbled. "Let him. He can't hold us up this way. After all, it might as well be he as a dozen of his Legionnaires. The brave old imbecile—" He caught sight of Norval, who was waiting for permission to leave: "All right, Lieutenant—go—well, go and get drunk if you like!"

NORVAL saw the captain alone in a corner of a café, with a tall bottle before him. And he was surprised to find himself moved to sympathy, realizing that each day had brought the poor fellow closer to the unpleasant moment when a line was drawn at the end of his military record—the moment when his years of service, his hard won decorations, his wounds, would become statistics to be added up, split and analyzed to squeeze out the few francs for his pension.

Lavigne's eccentric behavior was the result of his life, and he was no more to be blamed for it than Norval could be blamed for the livid marks left on his chest by a bullet.

"I wonder," the lieutenant grumbled, "whether it would not be better to shoot an old horse than to put him out to pasture."

The captain saw him coming, smiled in a friendly fashion, but did not invite him to sit down. After a few banal words, Norval found it impossible to put into words what he had just understood, and went back to camp.


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They found the sector occupied by the company in a tumult. Legionnaires, many of them in trousers and undershirts, were grouped, shouting and swearing. A number of tents had been knocked down; rifles and equipment were strewn about carelessly. Before Norval could ask a question, a dozen men surrounded him. He saw their faces flushed, their eyes blazing, realized that they were in an ugly mood. It was an occasion to use diplomacy rather than authority.

"What's wrong, Legionnaires?"

"Is it true that the old man's getting sacked?" a young private asked. He forgot discipline, long training: "They say he's being sent away because he wouldn't let Depaul be taken right before the lot of us. Now, I say he was right—"

"There are other things involved," Norval assured him.

"That's what they say. But the cops started it. We're getting a delegation to call on the colonel—"

"Better not. He won't like it," Norval warned. "Might easily mean a month in the jug."

An old private, who wore the Dardanelles Medal, started to laugh bitterly: "Well, he'll have to jug the lot of us. Because we won't move unless the captain's along. You should be the one to speak—"

"I can't listen to that sort of talk, Raynaud," Norval snapped. "You men better clean up this mess and come to order."

He was growing angry, and shoved his way out of the group not too gently. Aware that he would not be obeyed, he did not look back. Humiliating as it was, he did not wish to risk punishing anyone. Legionnaires seldom become unruly, surly, but when they do, it is best to allow the mood to pass.

Near the tent, he found Vitrier in the center of another gathering.

"Here's Norval," a voice called out: "Eh, are you with us or against us?"

"Clear out. What's the idea of this row?" Norval grasped the speaker and whirled him from his path.

"He comes, or this company doesn't leave Kasbah-Tadla, and that's the idea!"

Vitrier followed Norval inside the tent.

"I've seen this happen before," he explained: "You can't argue with them now. They don't know what they're doing, they're so mad. I don't blame them, either. *They* had no business letting the captain start out with us if they meant to remove him."

Vitrier, I thought you didn't like him—"

"I don't, we don't agree," Vitrier admitted, without the least humor: "But what's right's right! The campaign started when we left Dar-Sarrouk, and if they send him away. I'll ask for a transfer. You better do the same—the men will be hard to handle, all two hundred of them. They won't back down easily."

The uproar outside increased. Men from other companies had come over and joined in the shouting. All appeared swept by a sort of resistless hysteria. Norval was wondering how long it would continue before he would be compelled to intervene—or if he hesitated too long, ordered to. But the cries unexpectedly turned to cheers: Lavigne was returning.

He held himself very erect, but his stride was not altogether steady. It was very evident that he was "loaded to the tonsils." The shouting man escorted him as he walked toward his tent, granting him an ovation.

"We're with you, Captain!"

"Nobody goes if you don't—"

"Stick it out, eh? Stick it out—"

Lavigne halted before his quarters, turned to face the soldiers, steadied himself with a visible effort. He lifted both hands for silence, and the mercenaries stopped shouting, waited avidly for his words. After the familiar pull at his mustache, the captain cleared his throat.

Norval's knees were trembling. What

would the formidable old chap do now? What fantastic course would he urge? The men, right or wrong, were ready to act on his wishes.

"Comrades—" Lavigne called out: "Legionnaires, my Legionnaires! Before being my friends, you are soldiers. Good soldiers obey or die. I shall obey until I die! You must do the same. Obey your officers, whoever they are. I am grateful for your good wishes, but you are mistaken.

"Do you want it said that Old Lavigne, crazy Lavigne, had not even taught his Legionnaires obedience, discipline? You will stop this nonsense, follow your chiefs, obey and die, fight and win, silently, patiently as always. When you get the chance, vent your anger on the enemy. That's the best thing you can do for me—the last thing!"

The effect of this speech was miraculous. The men turned away without another shout, without another cheer. Within ten minutes, all damage had been repaired. The company's street was clean, orderly. The episode appeared over.

But another miracle occurred that evening: Although leaves had been granted for town, not one Legionnaire left the camp. Not a candle burned, no sound was heard save the steps of sentries. The outfit had gone into mourning, in silent protest.

The Legionnaires were silent and grave on parade the following day. They listened, rigid and calm, as the orders of the day were read off by an adjutant. Not a man moved when the order sending Captain Lavigne to Meknes rolled from the lips of the noncom. And they prepared to march away.

But the list of orders was not finished. Another item had been added:

"By special decision of the general commanding the Mobile Group of Tadla, the preceding order has been annulled and Captain Lavigne will continue in command of the Second Company of the March Battalion of the Foreign Legion, for the duration of the coming campaign."

Then a deep cheer resounded, like an explosion, torn from the chest of the Dar-Sourrak Legionnaires by a satisfaction too powerful to control. Lavigne stood very still, but Norval saw an artery in his neck pulsating visibly.

"They had to give in," he said later. "Thirty-five years—they couldn't laugh them off."

AS Napoleon I was defeated in Russia by "General Winter", the expedition to Roka-Menouar came near to defeat by "General Rain." When well under way toward its goal, it was surprised by an unseasonal downpour which turned the plains into swamps and the few existing trails into streams of mud.

The Legion units turned into labor gangs to mend the roads, to haul the artillery out of quagmires. Occasionally, they dropped picks and shovels to beat off raids by the enemy.

Because of the damp added to other fatigues and hardships, many of the men suffered from recurrence of old diseases, dysentery or malarial fevers. But the march continued—admission of failure, retreat, is dangerous before barbaric foes. The sun came out and dried the mud swiftly, to turn the top layers of soil into a brittle, crumbling composition that the trampling of hoofs and boots, the grinding wheels of carts and cannon, turned to floury red dust which rose in choking clouds at the least wind.

The Intelligence Service reported that Roka-Menouar was defended by excellent warriors. The aviation announced that reinforcements were coming north in small bands swarming on the mountain trails. The general grew cautious, for his was the usual plight of a colonial leader: There was little glory in whipping native foes if he won. If he lost and

was forced to retreat, a heavy rain which slowed down the column might lead to a debacle. And, in the French Colonial Service, it is against tradition for the leader to be among the survivors.

Luck seemed against the expedition, but the Mobile Group camped in the plain below Roka-Menouar at last, only three days behind schedule. The crenelated walls and square towers resembled a stronghold of feudal Europe, rising on the crest of a high hill.

It had been bombed from the air on several occasions, by squadrons from Meknes, in retaliation for attacks on friendly tribes. But air bombardment in colonial warfare does not bring about a conclusion, perhaps because the natives lack the finely developed sense of property of Europeans and their high esteem for comfort and physical safety. They will yield to panic at the moment, but as soon as the danger seems over, their morale remains unshaken. Moreover, bombs are costly. In the end, the poor chap known as "infantry sucker", armed with rifle and bayonet, decides the issue by actual occupation.

Legionnaires say that the picturesque branches of the army make the noise and the smoke, but that the infantryman conquers.

Preparations were made for storming the town. As was proper and traditional, the March Battalion of Legion would draw the hardest task, the frontal attack. The operation, according to plans, would not take long. The troops would advance under artillery protection and enter through the breeches made by shells. Sketch-maps, made from airplane photographs, were distributed to officers and noncoms. Each detachment was assigned a particular sector to clean up and control after penetrating through the outer wall.

"A tough job," Lavigne told Norval. "If those fellows will only put up a good fight—"

The lieutenant knew that the old officer had had a long private interview with the colonel before the regimental chief had gone back to Meknes. The veteran had emerged oddly quiet, apparently imbued with a fine desire to behave normally.

Certainly, Lavigne had worked as hard as any one of his men on the trails, and he had grasped opportunities to risk himself avidly. Norval believed that he was trying to beat time, the dwindling gap between himself and retirement, striving to become a major. And he knew how little prospect there was that Lavigne would be promoted. The coming attack would be his last, in all probability.

Then, with the assault but forty-eight hours off, Lavigne suddenly collapsed and was taken to the field-hospital.

Before long, all learned that the captain was suffering from hemoglobinuric fever and that his condition was extremely serious. The disease attacks the morale as much as the body, and a man who might carry on with a slug through his bowels becomes a whimpering child.

Norval went to see him, and despaired. Lavigne's face was like a skull covered with yellow tissue, with bluish areas around mouth, nostrils and eyes. The horrible spells of retching left him weaker each time. The mustaches had been clipped short, and whitish whiskers bristled on his cheeks and sagging chain. Hebner, his eyes red from weeping, stood in a corner, helpless and sullen.

"Well, Captain—" Norval sought to be cheerful, faltered and murmured banal words: "A bit done up, eh? But they tell me you'll pick up in time for the show. Don't worry, you have two days."

The military doctor had informed him that Lavigne could not last through the night. The captain, his head rolling on the hard pillow, tried to grin, his lips moved spasmodically.

"No—croaking—this time—" he whis-

pered. "Croaking—" a vestige of strength pressed his lean fingers around Norval's hand: "they were right—too old—there comes a time when—a man can't take it—"

"Come on," Norval said. "You can lick this."

"Trying—trying—" Lavigne murmured: "I wish it had all been different—a bullet under the sun—in the open—croaking like this—sad—tell the major—I must talk to him—"

He stirred, and the doctor who had accompanied Norval, a young chap with whom the lieutenant had gone on many parties in Meknes and Marrakesh, indicated the exit: Lavigne was about to have a spell.

NORVAL went to see the battalion commander, who shrugged.

"I know what he wants to see me about: The colonel promised him the *rosette* if Lavigne agreed not to drink. You noticed he drank nothing stronger than wine. The decent thing would be to go and tell him the decoration was coming. But as he's due for trouble—Paris insists on an investigation of that trouble with the police—if he recovered, by a miracle, I don't know what he'd do!"

"I think you can take a chance, Major—" Norval said. "He's pretty low."

"All right—" The battalion commander's eyes grew moist. "Breaks my heart to see him go like that. Known him twenty years. Fine fellow, grand soldier."

The following day, Lavigne was still alive. Legionnaires off-duty hung around the hospital lines, as if morbidly fascinated, waiting for news that he had passed on. Some speculation was expressed as to what Hebner would do. A few claimed he would commit suicide, others insisted he would merely seek another soft job. There are skeptics in the Legion as elsewhere.

That night, when Norval called, the doctor told him Lavigne was unconscious, made a gesture of chopping down with one hand: "Eleven or twelve—finished."

At dawn, the mounted scouts rode out to make contact with the enemy, and the first shots of the combat slapped out of the morning mist. The flanking units, who were to push by the town east and west, marched away, the Moroccan *Tirailleurs* to the squealing of native clarinets and the rattling of small drums. The Legion, due to make the frontal attack, was to leave thirty minutes after.

Norval decided to go for news. Lavigne was still alive.

"I don't understand it," the young doctor said as if in apology. "Yesterday, I started to wonder if this hemoglobinuric was malarial, or induced by the preventive doses of quinine the patient took when fever started in the column. Some of those old colonials are poisoned by the stuff. So I shifted from the Macedonian treatment, quinine through the stomach, to injection of chlorhydrate of quinine. Odd—the other case of hemo, young Legionnaire, athletic, popped right out between my hands! And Captain Lavigne, although very weak, is not only alive, but conscious."

As they entered the tent, Hebner showed the doctor the contents of a bucket. The medical officer nodded, and shook his head. Hopeless. Lavigne was stretched out, his eyes closed, his face strangely peaceful. Foolishly, Norval thought that he would be furious if he ever recovered sufficiently to learn that his carefully tended mustaches had been clipped.

"Hello, young fellow," Lavigne whispered, without opening his eyes. His hand was burning, but he had recognized Norval's touch. "Hebner tells me you start out in a few minutes—"

"Yes, and we're all sorry you can't make it, Captain. Everybody in the company wanted to see you, but natural-

ly it could not be allowed. They said to tell you we'd do our best, that you wouldn't be ashamed of us."

"Ashamed of them, the gallant slobs," Lavigne tried to laugh. "They're the best soldiers in the world." His voice trailed off in an indistinct mumble, and Norval was about to leave when he opened his eyes, spoke in a stronger voice: "Norval—tell me the truth: I'm croaking, eh?"

"You've a fine chance, Captain, of pulling through."

"Legionnaire's word?"

Norval was silent. And he was ashamed to lie to this man, who had never been afraid of death. Lavigne's dry chuckle resounded again like a rale.

"Croaking! Officer of the Legion of Honor—posthumously! What does anything matter now? Listen, they got me to hold off liquor for weeks, and that's what ruined me. I was too used to it. Could you get me a drink before I kick off?" He waited, pleaded: "Absinthe, anisette, cognac, something, anything I can taste going down—"

The doctor shook his head at Norval, tapped his left chest with a thumb.

"Wouldn't be good for you, Captain," Norval said.

"Croaking anyway, so what?"

Norval was impressed by this logic and looked challengingly at the doctor, who appeared uneasy.

"Well," the medical man agreed, "maybe a little champagne. I'll make a requisition slip for the pharmacist and—"

"To hell with that," Norval snapped. He beckoned to Legionnaire Hebner, bringing out his wallet and fingering bills: "I have nothing smaller. Give me the change later, or keep it if I'm not back. Go to the trader and get the best champagne he has." He glanced at his watch. "Got to go. See you later, Captain."

"Thanks. Tell them—" Lavigne muttered.

"Yes, yes, I'll tell them, Captain—"

He hurried out, wiped his eyes outside. He had seen the bodies of close friends without yielding to surface emotion, but the sight of that brave old man dying on a hospital cot within sound of a battle, he who had seen so many, broke him down. He joined the company, already on the move toward the front.

## CHAPTER IV

### LAST COMMAND

THE chill of dawn was still in the air, and the crests were shrouded in fleecy fog. Long streamers of mist drifted through the ravines, rolled up the slopes before the light wind. Flashes blinked in that whiteness; detonations thudded and echoed dully.

"Open order—"

The combat groups deployed, as the first missiles passed overhead. The Senegalese were engaged in the ravines to the right, and their shrill fighting yelps rose at intervals. During a pause, Norval spoke to a white noncom of Colonials, who was walking back to the ambulance. His mangled arm dripped through the first-aid bandage.

"They're brisk and busy this morning," the man explained. "Don't leave easily, either. Waited for our bayonets a couple of times, and when they do that this early in the day, they're tough by afternoon! They have some new guys, big, blackish fellows. One of them smashed my arm with a musket that he must have inherited from his grandfather. You'll be seeing them."

"Forward, come on, forward—"

The Legion companies were on the slope ending at the walls of the town. There were skirmishers scattered over it, some behind natural shelter, others concealed in rifle pits. The progress of the Europeans was slow, appeared leisurely. There were stops, to annihilate a minor

center of resistance with rifle-grenades.

Sub-Lieutenant Vitrier, on the left of the line, caught Norval's glance, pretended to wipe his brows with his hand, to fling perspiration from his fingers. It was as clear as words: "Hot work ahead!" Then he pointed upward excitedly.

The thick mist above them had suddenly lifted like a curtain and Roka-Menouar had appeared in a downpour of sunlight that turned the gray-brown walls to white. There were darker patches, the gaps made by air bombs and the artillery bombardment. Although the range was still too long for effective fire, streaks of fire blinked from the loopholes. The defenders felt that they had ammunition enough to risk wasting cartridges!

Two seventy-five guns, of the battery near the camp, opened fire. The stumps of the towers were battered again, and before long a canopy of dark dusk hung over the town.

Until that moment, the Second Company had operated smoothly and mechanically, performing like a well-oiled machine. This business was unlike war, a calm, steady advance. The sight of knots of the enemy caught by the automatics while fleeing to new cover and hashed out of existence, brought about a feeling of invincibility. Norval felt borne onward by a will outside of himself, shoved forward by a formidable, irresistible force.

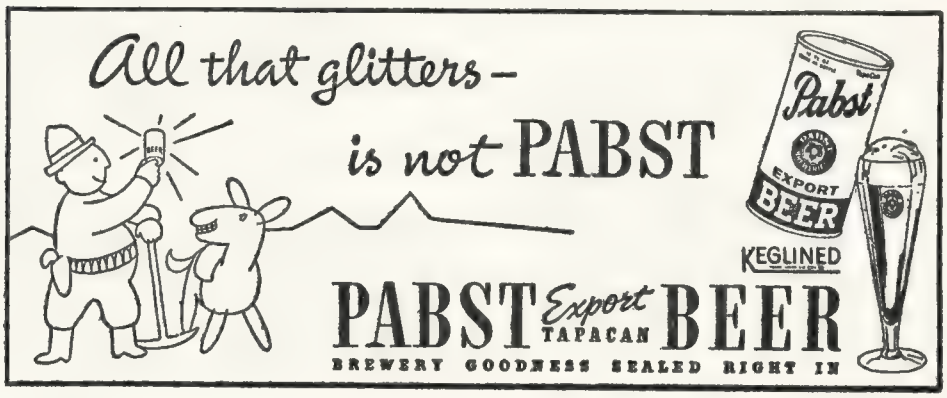
Unexpectedly, he was surprised to find that fine confidence ebbing from him, from his men, without visible motive. Despite lack of scientific acceptance, a definite fluid seems to connect fighting men; and along that fluid, like a mysterious cerebral electricity, to pass excitement, elation, or discouragement, fear and panic. Something had occurred, somewhere on the battlefield, out of sight, to shift the balance.

The lieutenant's sensation resembled that of a skilled artisan who feels the metal edge of a trusted tool suddenly loosened in its wooden handle. An instant before, he had had his Legionnaires in hand, and now they had escaped him—he no longer led a company, but some one hundred and seventy-odd individuals!

Yet nothing was changed around him: The Berbers were retreating, the sun was bright, and the shells kicked up columns of debris and dirt within the town. Then the resistance stiffened, as if the same occult tidings had been brought to the Chleuhs. They fought with new fury, held on until grenades smashed around them, until the bayonets glittered a few yards away.

"Al-lah—Al-haha—"

The advancing skirmish line had been rolling up the slope in good order. Held



up at various points by isolated riflemen, it became uneven. The Berbers were steadying down to their task. They were well supplied with cartridges; most of them used modern magazine rifles. At times, their discharges ripped out like precise platoon firing by regular troops.

Around Norval's head, missiles vibrated melodiously, whispering their odious messages of mutilation and death. A hundred impacts rapped against the brittle soil, cracked on pebbles, passed through the bushes with the rustle of smashing twigs.

There was no need to spread his arms and motion the line to sink for a rest—the Legionnaires were huddled, hugging the ground before he had finished the gesture. The flanking companies had taken shelter also, for it would have been murderous to continue the climb against such superbly adjusted fire. He grunted with satisfaction when no casualties were reported.

Norval sought to react against stubborn discouragement. The dread of coming failure, of impending death, of decay, crawled through his brain like a loathsome insect.

"You'll get through this and a lot more," he addressed himself. "You've seen worse. This pause will make the swine lose cohesion—they got the timing by accident. Hell, they can't organize their fire like that again—you'll live through it—" Then, clearly as if some voice had spoken in his ear, came the retort: "You'll live through it, maybe. But why? To get it the next time, or the next. Or to end like poor old Lavigne, a crazy veteran, laughed at by everybody, on a hospital cot, between a brace of slop-buckets—poor old Lavigne!"

A whistle blast slashed through the slackening fusillade.

"*En avant, la Légion, en avant!*"

His call achieved the ancient miracle anew; obedience, discipline, habit, brought the men to their feet, exposed faces, chests, unprotected bowels, to the whining slugs. But the effort was perceptible, and the headlong, spirited dash of lucky days was wanting.

A ragged discharge, then the volleys again.

Two yards, four yards, ten yards—

The sloping brown earth, sparkling with brilliant particles in the sun, the buff and brown boulders, the low bushes: Behind them, the glitter of metal of gun barrels, fiery spirits, dark balls that were human heads, the deliberate movements of uplifted arms and the hunching of shoulders against butts.

"Wait, you swine, wait—"

Norval did not know whether he was crying those words, or if another man was shrieking. There was the flat sheen of steel blades, the white of teeth in dark flash, moving figures in somber cloaks: The big, swarthy fellows that the Colonial sergeant had spoken of. Strange men from the far south, from the little known hinterland where Africa is no longer mountain and not yet Sahara! Warriors, fearless warriors!

THEY crouched and waited for the Europeans, with clubbed rifles, heavy sticks and curved knives to pit against grenades and bayonets. It was a question of seconds—but an automatic rifle enfiladed them from the flank and they rolled aside like a screen, some sprawling and squirming on the ground, the others off for the rear on twinkling muscular legs!

"Come on—"

Norval covered a few yards more, and the earth burst so near that he imagined he felt the searing heat of the rifles' flames on his face: It was a short, shallow trench, which his men cleaned out with grenades.

He hurdled it, and shouted that everything was going well, that the natives would not stand much longer.

But within his head, like a lantern

aglow in a storm, an odd remnant of cold, clear reasoning was left: Norval saw himself going forward, knowing that he would be killed. He knew that the bullet would strike him between the eyes, and put out that light, put it out forever. Norval, Lieutenant, killed in action; minor, unimportant combat on the southern border!

"*Allons, allons—*"

He had to scream to reach his men, for he was no longer in touch with them, did not feel part of the whole as he should have. Nothing was going rightly today, perhaps because he would be killed! They lunged and bobbed in the drenching sunlight like ghosts!

"Eh, there!"

Some one was even more frightened than he was, it seemed—a young Legionnaire, Paschen. His group had outstripped Norval's, and he ran within six feet, abreast of the lieutenant. He was faltering, his wind and his will were gone. Norval saw his face so pale, so decomposed by terror, that he was hardly recognizable. His eyes were protruding and haggard, his whole bearing oozed panic. In another moment, he would drop his rifle and scuttle back!

Norval obliqued, lunged with one hand to grasp his sleeve and shove him ahead. It did not take much, a twist, a push, and the Legionnaire faced the right way again, toward the enemy. He was as safe thus as with his back turned, perhaps safer, for his sergeant had a hasty finger and harsh standards!

"Keep going, Paschen—"

What was the matter with the man?

Paschen had jumped. And after staggering three steps, he howled. He turned again, to run back. And this time he had dropped his rifle, was yielding to panic. The fool—he caught Norval around the shoulders, struggled, screamed in his ear.

He had been hit, beneath the leather peak of the *képi*, over the eyes or through the eyes. It was impossible to know, as the blood flooded his face like a mask of scarlet silk; his chin was outlined by a thicker, gleaming red line. He was hit, blinded, and did not have the sense to drop, to get out of the way—

The lieutenant could have eluded his grasp, but there were two groups coming behind him; and the wounded man would scream on, and clutch at them as they passed, with his bloody, mutilated face, stripping them of courage. They must not see him now, the first casualty—

Death, wounds, they were nothing. But blindness—

Norval ran on, his hand red, the men behind leaping over the prostrate figure. And an atrocious thought seared his brain: He had struck Paschen, because it was necessary, because it was his job —to save the squad from contagious panic.

The whistle—

Norval knelt, gasping. He swept the sections with a glance. There were no orders needed. The auto-riflemen were doing their best, with few targets to shoot at. The slope ahead was cleared of defenders, cleared to the foot of the walls.

Those walls appeared very close, so near that Norval believed he could see the crumbling joints of the mud bricks. Somehow, he had guided his company to the right place, for he was before his objective, one of the main gateways. It was an iron-bound oaken door set deep in a masonry recess, perhaps two hundred and fifty yards away, every detail visible through glasses.

The Berbers had cut down and burned the bushes, removed all large stones. Before Norval stretched an inclined plane of reddish earth as smooth as the palm of his hand. When the signal came to attack again, he would have to lead his men against those solid walls, toward that unbroken door.

There were loopholes in the walls,

loopholes flanking the short alley leading to the door. And behind each loophole waited a native with a repeating rifle.

"Three killed, two wounded—"

Sergeant Hauffen had reached his chief's side, walking erect through the flying metal. Here was one man who was not afraid. He looked ahead, scanned the walls, the door, and muttered in a quiet, almost impersonal fashion.

"Say, Lieutenant, the sketch showed a gap in there, and I don't see any. There'll be some cold meat scattered around there in a few moments!"

Norval handed him the glasses: There had been a gap in that wall, flanking the door, a fine, wide gap. But the hole had been plugged, screened by methods learned from the French, with planking and sand bags. Native leaders were improving, and it was no longer wise to count on finding things unchanged after a lapse of twenty-four hours.

Nevertheless, in a few minutes, perhaps in a few seconds, the lieutenant would have to launch his men against the obstacle. They would get through, at least some of them would. There were two places where the wall could be scaled, and the door could be smashed with explosives. But that would take precious time, with the Berbers firing at point-blank range from perfect shelter. His casualty list would be long, a splendid start for a company commander!

"Liaison—" he called.

A runner took the note he had scribbled hastily and raced away. He brought back a message from the major in a short time: "Attack suspended. All necessary shall be done."

IT was like a reprieve. Doubtless, other units had found themselves confronted with similar difficulties, for the engagement as a whole appeared to come to a stop. The Legionnaires used entrenching tools and large stones to throw up a sort of low breastwork. Gossip passed from man to man, and Norval found, as he had expected, that there had been cause for uneasiness: A section of Senegalese Infantry had been cut off and massacred in a ravine west of the town—only twelve survivors had been picked up. In the consequent confusion, the natives had come near to slicing through the French line and pouring down toward the camp.

There was a rush of sound overhead, and even those who had never been at the wrong end of cannon trajectories involuntarily touched their ears with their shoulders. Two shells dropped in the open, eighty yards ahead, two blooms of dense smoke spouting dirt and stones, while the acrid stench of sulphur filled the air. The next two dropped into the town. The loopholes spat flames for a few seconds in furious, helpless retaliation.

More shells fell, some too long, some too short. There was a lull, during which the guns probably changed positions: then the wall was hit twice, but too high. After that, the larger calibers were silent. Perhaps the pastime was growing expensive.

The major sent another message: A section would arrive from the engine-company of the battalion at two-fifteen, with a thirty-seven millimeters cannon and a mortar, to batter a breech in the wall. Nothing would be undertaken until then.

It was almost noon.

Norval left a few men on observation, withdrew the rest to a more sheltered spot, where a swell of the slope made direct hits from the walls unlikely. Rations and ammunition were brought up, the pack-mules halting a few hundred meters to the rear. Only a few shots were fired at the fatigue parties by the Berbers. They knew they would have better targets later.

After eating, the men sat about and smoked; a few went to sleep, faces hidden in their arms, or sprawled on their backs with the *képi* shading the eyes. The usual smells of the battlefield, smoke, powder and manure, drifted with the wind. It was possible to move about without much danger, for the snipers seldom tried a long shot at a moving figure.

Norval received word that Paschen had been seriously hurt, but would keep his sight. That brought some ease to his mind. And he settled for the long wait under the broiling sun.

At two, one of the flanking battalions emerged into the open on the other side of the town, and there were bursts of firing for a while. Norval thought it was perhaps a bad move—the defenders would fight all the harder, knowing that their retreat was cut off. Matters did not turn out right for the French today, it seemed, and the carefully prepared attack was striking snag after snag.

"School job," Vitrier commented. "I've seen tougher dumps taken without cannon—but you've got to move fast."

A FEW minutes after two, shouting some distance to the rear attracted Norval's attention. He believed at first that it was a derisive greeting to the specialists of the engine-section, who were arriving with their little cannon, their mortar—and the air of importance becoming men who were at one and the same time artillery-men and Legionnaires.

Then he saw a strange group ascending the slope, a Legionnaire astride a big mule which was led by another soldier. The mounted man wore a captain's *képi* and resembled a caricature of Lavigne. But as Norval had left him dying in

the hospital that morning, this seemed impossible. However, his stubborn doubts vanished when he identified the man on foot as Hebner.

"Stick here," he suggested to Vitrier, who did not appear to share his surprise. "I'll try to get him to go back." He ran down the hill, motioning for Hebner to halt, to turn about. The orderly did not even pause, and Lavigne waved his hand. Norval returned the greeting and shouted: "Get under cover somewhere. They'll be shooting this way as soon as they spot the mortar coming up!"

Lavigne spoke to his orderly, who turned the mule aside and led the way behind a rise of ground. Then Hebner clasped his chief in his arms, eased him to the ground gently. Lavigne could not stand, sank to a sitting position, but grinned as Norval reached him.

"Vast improvement, as you see," he boasted.

He looked like a living corpse. Aside from the officer's *képi*, his costume was a bizarre mixture: a private's tunic too short at the waist, too full around the chest, greenish hospital trousers, trooper's boots. He chewed an unlighted cigar.

"What are you doing here, Captain?" Norval protested.

"Looking around a bit—" He was still very weak, seemed about to collapse: "Hebner, my prescription!" The orderly produced a quart of cognac, which he kept inside the waistband of his breeches, took out the cork. Lavigne took three long swallows, smacked his lips: "You did me a very good turn, you know? I had asked for a real drink a hundred times, and had been refused." The old soldier glanced about, listened to the detonations: "We have a little time to kill. Sit down and I'll tell you a nice story.

"After you were gone, Hebner went to the trader's, and by the time he was back, the doctor was called away to look after the first wounded, a native cavalryman who had caught one through the guts. Hebner pops the cork off the first quart, and gives me a drink out of a cup. Tasted pretty good, and I got hold of the bottle and drank it. In a minute, I start to belch, then I'm sick as a dog. Just the same, I felt a little better after.

"So I try another bottle, and it stayed a little longer, and Hebner hands me the third when I ask him. And he never puts in a kick about my drinking everything, doesn't ask for a swallow or even look as if he wanted one. That made me suspicious, and as he was holding me up, I got a smell of his breath. Cognac!

"Don't be sore at him, young fellow, because it turned out fine. He tells me he had thought that maybe you wouldn't check up on your change, and he'd got himself a couple of bottles on the side. He wanted to call in the doctor to stop me, but finally I got him to give me a glass of the good stuff. It tasted fine. Guess keeping away from it had made me sick, because my system's so used to it. You might say I had water-poisoning!

"I get Hebner to shave me, to bring my clothes. I was feeling dizzy, but strong enough. There was no trouble getting out of the hospital—there were seven stretchers already in front of the receiving tent! Black soldiers, who had been pretty artistically carved up. The major was gone, of course, so I decide to get authorization to join my company from the general. Wanted everything regular.

"The general was busy playing Foch. So a staff-captain receives me and says it is too late, that he can't reach the major, and all that. I tell him not to mind, that I'll find the battalion myself. Then he goes and speaks to the staff-colonel, who talks with the general, who's seated on a folding-stool holding field-glasses on his lap. He snaps out some-

thing, the colonel tells the captain, who comes back to speak to me.

"I can't leave camp, he says, because I'm sick, and when I insist, he tells me he's very sorry, but I'm under arrest! And he shows me an order that's been dropped by the mail plane around ten o'clock. It's from Rabat Headquarters, and it says I'm suspended from my functions and must be sent back by the first convoy. Court of enquiry. It seems that the policeman—what was his name?"

"Caucher, Captain—"

"Well, the staff-captain explains it all to me, nice and polite, but sort of stiff. That cop, Caucher, has talked to the newspapers, because the pinching of Depaul in the Legion made the headlines, and he's told them some fantastic story of being ordered shot when he tried to take away the prisoner. Division Headquarters explained that I was not available for investigation, that I was away on active service and could not be recalled before the campaign was over.

"The opposition press started to yell that I had been removed, hidden, that there was collusion of the army authorities to obstruct justice. The War Department gave in and ordered my immediate recall. I am to be sent back with the wounded. Meanwhile, the little captain goes on to say, he regrets that things could not be kept away from me any more, and that it was his duty to order me back to the hospital. He probably sees that I don't like it, and takes no chances, but sticks a sentry before my tent, a Senegalese! He orders the hospital attendant to take away my uniform, then shakes hands with me and asks me not to be sore at him.

"The orderly had forgotten my *képi*. As soon as he is gone, I tell Hebner to get me some clothes. He takes the *Tirailleur's* carbine and cartridges—"

"What happened to him?" Norval wondered.

"Nothing, I suppose. I ordered Hebner to go easy, and those Negroes have thick skulls. The ammunition echelon loaned me a mule without kicking, and here I am—" Lavigne's hand fumbled for his mustache, the fingers twitched in annoyance when they had to seek hair close to the lip: "I told you the truth. You'll be perfectly within your rights if you insist on keeping command—"

The sensible course would have been to prevent the captain from staying. But Norval had thought deeply in the past few hours. Anyone who deliberately sought to undergo what he had felt during the morning deserved consideration.

"You haven't told me anything, Captain," the lieutenant smiled. "As a disciplined subordinate, I cannot ask you questions. You can stay here and watch the attack."

"That's not what I came for," Lavigne said simply.

Norval knew what the captain had come to find. And if he had earned anything in his thirty-five years of service, he had earned that most of all. Age, habits, life and their consequences hemmed the old man in a circle of steel, were forcing him to seek a way out, escape from his plight.

"But you can't walk very far, Captain—"

"I'll ride on that mule. Sound and sane animal, not skittish—" Lavigne grinned feebly: "As a captain, I'm supposed to be mounted, eh? Hebner will lead me."

"As you order, Captain.'

A sudden burst of rifle firing from the walls attracted their attention. Lavigne leaned on Norval's arm and was led to a vantage point.

The Legionnaires of the engine-section had decided on their position, and were assembling their weapons, within a half-kilometer of the town. The Berbers had realized their purpose, and sought to drive them away. But the gunners worked deliberately, paying no heed to

the bullets kicking up the dirt about him.

A glistening tube on its sturdy tripod, the thirty-seven millimeters cannon opened fire first. After the second shot, the small shells smacked into the doorway in a steady stream. The Legionnaires cheered when they saw the obstacle vanish in a series of explosions. The dull, heavy detonations of the mortar started, and smashed at the flanking masonry.

"In my days," Lavigne said, "we'd have done the job without artillery. A rush, a brace of petards against the hinges, and that door would have gone down just as well."

Norval nodded.

It was useless to point out that in those days, the natives would have lacked experience, would have been armed with flintlocks instead of magazine rifles. Useless to remind Lavigne that even before his days, in the Tonkin, the Legion had passed through breeches made by artillery in the Chinese fortifications. The captain's belief in what had been was stronger, more real than facts.

IT was two-twenty-five when the signal was given for the companies to prepare for the attack. Legionnaires started for the firing line, strolling casually while out of range, to dart with comical speed over exposed spots.

"Almost time," Lavigne said.

Norval assisted him to rise and climb into the saddle. He walked beside the animal, which was led by Hebner. He could not do otherwise, could not go ahead by himself; dignity checked his stride. Even the old captain, usually anxious to have the starring role, did not urge him to seek cover. As for the orderly, he went on like a man living a dream: He knew what his chief wanted.

Word that Lavigne had rejoined the company had spread, and many voices hailed him. Vitrier came to meet the group, stood at attention respectfully, four paces away, saluted, then hastened forward to shake hand publicly. It seemed normal to all that the captain should have come to lead them.

The natives now paid some attention to the odd little procession; the air droned. This was a fantastic episode, this foolish parade across the hill within a few hundred yards of the enemy. But in one way, he was glad of it, because the major could not fail to see it and might take whatever course he elected.

Norval left Lavigne in the center of the line and trotted to his post with the first section. Sergeant Motinski looked at him, lifted his shoulders.

"The captain will get himself picked off, on that mule," he said. Then he read Norval's glance, continued in the same quiet voice: "Oh, I get it! But if he's looking for it, he's probably safe."

Norval nodded: It was a firmly established belief that a bullet avoided a man who sought for it. A superstition probably based on predestination—"You don't go until your time has come."

The gunners of the engine-section were leaving, and the marksmen behind the walls were centering on the skirmish line. Lavigne, conspicuous on the mule, should have been dropped very soon. Norval thought he had been when he tottered in the saddle, and several men rose and ran to his side.

But only the mule had swerved, flank seared by a slug. The Legionnaires were gestured back to cover. A moment later, Hebner dropped. Another private picked up the task, held on to the bridle.

"Right between the eyes," the report came. "Never knew what struck him."

The captain would be held responsible for that death. Yet Norval recalled the books he had read during his ardent youth, the officers refusing to dismount under fire, scorning death, as an example of courage to their men. That had been a tradition.

There was a pounding of boots; a Legionnaire slid down at the lieutenant's side. For some seconds, his words were incoherent.

"Maj — major — meaning — comedy —must stop—"

"I get you," Norval helped him out: "I'm supposed to do something about this, eh? I want a written order."

The man galloped back. Lavigne had lifted his arm: "Forward, my lads!"

The company rose and went ahead at the double. Whistles resounded right and left, the other units started. Lavigne had anticipated the order. But it was too late for anyone to interfere.

THE sections kept abreast of the trotting mule, advancing in fine order. The walls ahead were blinking light, and the air was again filled with murderous whines. For two minutes, this race against death continued. Men slithered forward, easily, as if flowing to heaps on the ground. Then the massive brown rampart loomed directly ahead—there was the breech cluttered with debris, the smashed gateway.

In the short recess leading to the gate, the din of detonations was terrifying; the mule became frightened, balked. As he hurried by, Norval saw the captain tumble. But he had no time to halt: He was inside the town, in a sort of oblong public place strewn with wreckage and dead bodies. The streets that opened into it had been barricaded, and some of the more determined defenders kept up the fight.

Instinctively, the Legionnaires hugged the walls. There was a second of hesitation; then some of them found the solution, scaled to the terraced tops of the nearest huts, and could be seen, silhouetted against the sky, swinging grenades into the defenders. The barricades became the cores of sharp, brief, unorganized minor combats. The attackers tore planks loose, shifted sand bags, jabbed and fired all at the same time.

Beyond the barricades opened the streets, and men scurried along the buildings, tossing grenades into every opening. Thick smoke drifted, the strong smell of burnt explosive covering other stenches.

From all quarters of the town resounded the trepidating reports of machine guns and automatics, enfilading aisles, sweeping the terraced roofs. Very few of the hillmen resisted now. And when these revealed their location by firing, they were soon wiped out.

"Halt—" Norval called. He consulted his sketch. "This is as far as we go for the present. Place automatics at the angles. But be careful about shooting too quickly. A company of Moroccan *Tirailleurs* is working toward this place from the opposite side."

"Understood, Lieutenant," Hauffen said.

"Where's the captain?"

"Last I saw of him was in the open place near the gateway," said a man who had come up with bags of grenades. "His mule must have run away, because he was on foot—"

Norval glanced about: The hardest work was over, his presence here was not absolutely needed. He ran back, inserting a fresh clip into his automatic pistol. As he replaced the weapon in the holster, he felt a puerile fear that Lavigne might be displeased to see his lieutenant using it instead of the service revolver.

He encountered the captain coming through the street, supported by the young private who had volunteered to replace Hebner. All the others had forgotten him in the excitement. Lavigne had been ill again, was scarcely able to walk. His jaws sagged.

"All over?" he asked Norval.

"Not quite, Captain. We've got some of them penned up in the middle of the town—"

"I want to go there—" Lavigne pleaded.

"All right, Captain."

Norval took hold of the officer's free arm, and he and the Legionnaire almost carried him along. Lavigne's face was contorting spasmodically. The lieutenant had an inspiration: What had worked before might help now. He offered him a small metal flask filled with brandy. After draining it, the captain appeared stronger. But it was strength that would not last long.

At the advanced posts, shots were still exchanged from roof to roof. Lavigne asked to be hauled on a terrace, and he pretended to look around. The gold braid scintillating on his *képi* made him a fine target. But his groping glance did not find what he sought, death. The reports grew fewer.

At last, he gave up, asked to be lowered to the street again. For a moment, courage had left him, and he rested his shoulders against a wall, his teeth chattering.

"Hebner, the poor devil—" he murmured. "Everybody but me! Even death doesn't want such an old wreck. "He steadied and tried to laugh: "Come on, young fellow, help me give myself up. I'll go through it all. You can bet that the civilians won't miss me! A veteran of the Legion, an old-fashioned soldier—what fine game!"

They resumed the dreary march. They turned a corner, entered a narrow lane between blind walls, deserted, empty except for a few bodies. Lavigne leaned heavily on his companions, looked at the dead.

"Everybody but me—"

His lips moved, he mumbled, a prayer or a curse. Then something stirred on the ground, not six feet away. Norval, reaching for his pistol, was half-blinded by the flame, deafened by the thunderous report. The private had released his hold, and the whole weight of Lavigne dragged at Norval's shoulder. He caught the emaciated body in his arms, saw the butt of the rifle swing up, swing down—there was a sickening impact.

"He's dead, this time," the Legionnaire said loudly.

Norval eased the captain to the ground, nodded.

Lavigne was gone.

SOME months later, in a mess room, Norval saw a glint of concealed amusement in the eyes of his listener, a sub-lieutenant new to the Corps. And he sought to recall what he had said to motivate it. His last words rang clearly in his mind:

"You should have known Captain Lavigne. There was a case for you! A real old time Legionnaire. Hated cops and civilians. He was probably the last of his type. Unless you've known such guys, you can serve here ten years—you'll never understand the Legion!"

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# SUBMARINE GOLD

## by COMMANDER EDWARD ELLSBERG

Author of "On the Bottom," "Pig Boats," etc.

(Begin here)

HER DECK a shambles, her crew disabled and battered, the gold laden salvage ship *Lapwing* wallowed off the Peruvian coast.

Mutiny had struck. It had been suppressed, but at sore cost. Captain Ramsay, owner and leader of the salvage expedition, had seen half of his crew die; of the men remaining, only six could be counted on. Six men—to bring the *Lapwing* back to Northern waters with the gold which had been salvaged from the sunken Spanish galleon *Santa Cruz!*

The task was not hopeless, Ramsay reasoned. Sorensen, the leader of the mutineers, was trussed in a cabin. Given an even break from the ocean, they could make Panama.

That was how it seemed to Ramsay on the night following the mutiny, when he sent his crew below for much needed rest.

But with the following morning, fresh disaster had come. Sorensen had escaped, forced the radio man to warn the Peruvian government that the gold was leaving their waters. Sorensen had then killed the radio man and escaped in a small boat.

And even before the shock of that discovery had abated, there came the final blow. The Peruvian cruiser *Esmer-*

*alda*, having caught Sorensen's message, had picked him up, and was on their course!

As the smoke of pursuit blackened the sea, Ramsay ordered the bullion thrown overboard, and the *Lapwing*, ignoring the warning shells, fled away from that spot which marked the treasure.

Having thus secretly jettisoned the gold, Ramsay's plan had been to escape in the low visibility, to return later, drag for his abandoned anchor chain and heave up the hawser and the treasure in a few hours without even putting a man over the side in a diving rig.

But a shell from the *Esmeralda*, tearing through the stack of the *Lapwing*, hit the wheel and exploded on the bridge. Ramsay, seriously injured, fell to the deck, while the salvage boat, helm and helmsman gone, drove full speed toward the shores of treacherous El Morro.

Don Diego Arenda, ex-captain in the Peruvian Navy and Ramsay's second in command, averted immediate disaster, but it was time to take drastic steps. If the boarding party got aboard before the *Lapwing* sank, their ruse in jettisoning the gold would be exposed; the Peruvians would immediately start searching their late anchorage.

They succeeded in sinking the *Lapwing* before the *Esmeralda* arrived, and with the help of a blanketing fog, escaped in a small boat. All, that is, but Arenda, who, lingering too long below decks, found his mates gone. Arenda was picked up by the cruiser, and put in chains. Later would come Lima, a trial before his political enemies—and execution.

Meanwhile, marooned in the boat, hundreds of miles from the regular shipping lines, a handful of men waited for death. Ramsay had been revived, and for a time they had made way toward safe Northern waters. But now the fuel for the engine was gone and so was the drinking water. The sun was taking its toll on men already wearied beyond endurance.

Eventually, Ramsay rigged up a crude condenser and coils from odds and ends of materials on the boat, and managed to achieve what was little less than a miracle—to get fresh water from the sea! There was not much, but it was enough to keep life in them until a liner picked them up.

Later, in Panama, Ramsay set about his second gamble for the bullion. He had some twenty thousand dollars left. With it he must charter a tug and diving equipment. The race for that sunken gold was just beginning.

But he discovered that material such as this was hard to get. Worse, that Sorensen had seen members of his crew in a café. Extradition to Peru would be fatal—and there was not much time. Whatever was to be the last step in that desperate cruise—it would have to be taken at once!

## CHAPTER X (*continued*)

"ONLY two hundred and ten feet, Tom? So we bungled scuttling the *Lapwing*, after all?"

Soberly Ramsay looked from Tom's flushed face to Joe's, as the panting men before him poured out their story—the futile search for diving gear, Sorensen, the *Esmeralda*, Don Diego's capture, the threat of seizure and of extradition to Peru, the flight, and their precipitant escape.

Ramsay listened sadly. Panama was no longer safe for them.

"Well, boys, we'd better shift our anchorage. Get back to the hotel, get Mike and Bill, sign out, and all of you get out of Panama over into Balboa. We'll all be safer in the Zone."

"Aye, aye, Cap'n!" Leaving their captain on the bench, Tom hurried off, followed by Joe. Ramsay rose, thrust his hands into his pockets and wearily

started for Balboa, his mind seething over what he had learned. First he must call off his deal for the *Bessie*, then drop everything he had started in Balboa, until he could find some new approach to the task of recovering that gold.

Fitfully, with no beginning, no ending, his thoughts spun, trying to figure a way of retrieving his bullion; but his mind brought up each time hard against that obstacle of the gleaming white sides of the gunboat *Esmeralda*. No way of getting around that. And gnawing deep into his soul was the thought of returning to New York while his four millions in gold went to fill the treasury of Peru. And on top of all, the blood of Don Diego.

It was too much. Hopelessly, hour after hour, his aimless feet dragged along the pavements; but his thoughts were far away, beating endlessly like the surf on the beach at El Morro, against the armored sides of that cruiser, and like the surf, breaking against that one unyielding fact—the *Esmeralda* lying there over the wreck of the *Lapwing*, a bar to any expedition seeking to fish up the gold!

How far he walked, how many times he circled the streets, Ramsay never knew. Still deep in a maze of thought, he heard his name called, came back to the sidewalks of Balboa, looked around.

"Hey, Cap'n Ramsay!"

At a café table alongside him on the street were Bill and Mike, each puffing away on a long cigar, a couple of nearly emptied glasses before them.

"Come on, skipper, drop anchor here," said Bill hospitably. He motioned an attendant. "Waiter! Three more o' the same. Pronto!"

Mike pushed up another chair; Ramsay dropped wearily into it.

"Anythin' wrong, Skipper?" asked Bill. "We seen you go by twice lookin' like you was walkin' in your sleep, so me an' Mike figgers that the next time y' pass we'll make y' heave to. What's on yer mind?"

Ramsay shook his head. No use discussing the new trouble again until he had all his men together. Mechanically he gazed round. He was near the waterfront again. There were the palms, the sea wall; only now the tide was rolling in. It was near flood. Instead of a bare expanse of beach, the water was beating against the wall. The harbor seemed suddenly to have widened out.

"Seen Tom or Joe?" asked Ramsay. "They're looking for you over in Panama."

"No," replied Bill. "Have they located that diving gear yet?"

"Sure, it's hired already," responded Ramsay bitterly.

At that moment the waiter planked three glasses down on the table and Ramsay was saved from explaining further. Well, he was out the rental money, for it was useless now to take the rigs. He wondered about the other inquiries for them; how many suits had Sorensen hired in anticipation of his work on the *Lapwing*?

Funny, when you thought of it. Sorensen would find plenty of diving gear on the *Lapwing* when he got down to her if he looked around; about the only thing of value he would ever find on her. Good joke on Sorensen, that. He laughed aloud at the thought.

"Here's luck!" Bill raised his glass. "What's the joke, Cap'n?"

"It's deep stuff, Bill. Take too long to explain now." Ramsay lifted his drink, sniffed. Whisky straight. He drank it at one swallow, beckoned the waiter for another. Might as well. With throat smarting from the impact of the liquor, he lay back in his chair waiting for the next drink, debating vaguely whether to catch the next steamer to New York and start looking for that job, or stay in Panama until the *Esmeralda* steamed out to sea again.

MIKE nudged Bill uneasily, whispered.

"What's up, Bill? Sure, an' I niver seen the skipper hoistin' Scotch aboard that way before. It ain't like him."

"I'll say it ain't, Mike. Somethin's haywire. I know what'll bring 'im round. You watch, Mike." Bill sipped his whisky, toyed carelessly with the glass a moment, then with elaborate nonchalance, tilted his chair back against a pillar of the café and looked out over the harbor as if searching for something. Finally he spoke.

"I don't see 'er, Mike, but one o' my lamps ain't so good. You take a look."

A little puzzled, Reilly twisted his head for a view over the broad harbor, then turned back.

"Nuthin' but a few small boats. What're you lookin' for, Bill?"

"Why, that *S-53* we saw this mornin'. She's due to sail, an' I thought she might be on her way out by now."

"The *S-53*? That old tin can? Naw, she ain't in sight. I'll bet she goes out on the end of a towline, if they get 'er away from the pier at all. It's a cryin' shame what they're doin' to that poor old sub. There oughta be a law agin it!"

Covertly Bill watched Ramsay while Mike spoke. But if he had expected that he would attract attention to the discussion, he was startled by the result. At the first mention of the *S-53*, Ramsay jerked bolt upright. Now he sat, staring wide-eyed at Mike, his empty glass clenched in his huge hand, his fingers twitching as if he had seen a ghost. Suddenly his long arm shot forward, and he clutched Bill by the arm.

"The *S-53*! Did you say the *S-53* was in this harbor?"

Bill winced under the grip.

"Don't tear my arm out over that floatin' wreck! She ain't worth it. Mike an' me bumped into her while we was scoutin' the waterfront. She's due to sail for San Diego today."

Ramsay let go. The *S-53* in Balboa! There was the way out for him!

"Where is she, boys? She mustn't sail! Take me to her, quick!"

And to the amazement of both Bill and Mike, he flung a few dollars on the table, hailed a passing carriage, shoved them into it, and they were on their way, with Ramsay urging the driver to lash his nags into some semblance of speed as they headed toward the dock.

"What's the big idea?" asked Bill, gazing backward at the café they had just left. "We didn't owe that much in that *cantina*. Y're throwin' money away like a drunken sailor—which judgin' by yer actions, mebbe y' are!"

BUT Ramsay ignored him, and remained silent. He was too busy thinking. The *S-53!* The only privately owned submarine in existence, so far as he knew. And she was in Balboa!

Well he remembered her career. She was one of a special class of four boats, all unlucky. One had sunk before she was ever delivered, while still on trial in the hands of her builders. Another, sunk in a collision, he had helped to salvage. One, stranded on a reef, was rebuilt and lengthened for greater safety and was now the only one still in commission. The *S-53*, the fourth unlucky sister, had been first decommissioned and then sold, complete with all her machinery, for exhibition purposes.

He even knew the crowd that had bought her. They had shown her at the Chicago Century of Progress Fair; now presumably she was on her way to San Diego for another exhibition tour. He knew her, all right. Had he not, in salvaging her sister, used the *S-53* as a rehearsal ship for his divers, become acquainted with almost every pipe and rivet, every valve, and every piece of machinery that went into the makeup of that class of subs?

And with the *S-53* in his hands, the

problem was solved. *Esmeralda* or no *Esmeralda*, he could sail submerged to the eastward of El Borro; while the Peruvians were struggling over the hulk of the *Lapwing*, he could bottom the sub, recover his treasure, and get away, safe and sure. He must have the *S-53* for a week. Regardless of her exhibition schedule, they must charter to him! Cost was no object now—that is, Ramsay reflected, provided they didn't want him to put up more than his $19,000 to start with.

The carriage stopped with a jolt.

Ramsay flung the driver some silver, jumped out. They were at the seawall, facing the anchorage area. And there, near the breakwater, a hundred yards out, low-lying against the high hulls of anchored merchantmen, was the *S-53*, her gray paint rust-streaked from a long passage, some miscellaneous underwear hanging out to dry against her conning tower, and her narrow deck dirty and littered with stores. Near her bow a small tug was maneuvering to pass a towline. Two men on the sharp prow of the submarine were standing by to receive a heaving line, while in the chariot bridge of the submarine, a fat man with a megaphone was directing operations.

"Just in time," muttered Ramsay. He lifted his hands, hailed them.

"Submarine there! Belay getting underway! We got a job for you!"

The man on the bridge turned at the hail, surveyed them leisurely, then lifted his megaphone briefly.

"Tell it to Sweeney! We got a job in San Diego and we're on our way!" Unconcernedly he turned back to watching the tug. A heaving line whistled through the air from the towboat; the "monkey's fist" shot over the sub's deck, banged against her thin superstructure. Instantly the men there grabbed the heaving line and started to haul it in, while on the tug the crew began paying out a towing hawser secured to the light heaving line.

In despair, Ramsay watched as the eyes of the manila hawser snaked across the gap from the drifting tug to the submarine. He had to have that submarine if it meant hi-jacking her to get control!

Bill broke in.

"Want to go aboard, Cap'n? Here's a shoreboat." He pointed down the stone steps to a native boat waiting there.

"Come on!"

All hands tumbled in. The boatman, hastily directed, lay back on his oars and in a moment his little skiff was headed for the *S-53*.

Meanwhile the hawser had reached the submarine, been threaded through her bullnose, and made fast inboard for towing. The tug was slowly steaming ahead; as Ramsay watched, the manila coils in the water straightened out and the hawser lifted from the surface. The submarine began to glide away while they were still fifty feet astern. Ramsay's eyes narrowed as he watched. They were losing ground. His hand went into his pocket, came out with a bill. A twenty. He held it up before the laboring boatman.

"It's yours if you catch that sub!"

The ragged oarsman cast a quick glance over the port oar at the tapering submarine ahead, then fixed his glittering eyes on the bill which Ramsay, seated in the sternsheets, dangled under his nose. Like a startled trout, the boat leaped ahead. The stroke nearly doubled; the oars bent visibly as the boatman put his back into the job and commenced to row like mad. The boat began to gain; before the tug and its tow had opportunity to increase speed, the skiff shot in against the rounded hull on the port quarter of the *S-53*, the boatman shipped his oars, and Mike, leaning over, seized a steel rung on her side. The little boat started to drag along in the wake of the submarine.

"Hey, you, keep off!"

Ramsay looked up. The man on the

bridge was waving at them; the two men in the bow were starting aft, one of them abreast the conning tower with a boathook poised, ready to push them away when he got aft. There was need for haste.

"Lay aboard her, boys!"

Ramsay dropped the twenty into the bottom of the boat, leaped up the rounded steel side of the fish-shaped hull, grabbing for the rail on the low deck. He caught it, dragged himself through, while Bill scrambled after him and Mike clambered up the steel rungs he had gripped. The boat drifted rapidly astern with the perspiring boatman clutching that twenty and pouring out a stream of thanks.

"WHAT d'y' think y're doing here? Call back your boat and get the hell off before we throw you off!"

Ramsay turned from the rail to see a megaphone waving beneath his nose and behind it the very red and angry countenance of the stoutish man from the bridge.

"So this is the way you greet your old friends, Sam! What's the matter—getting too rich as well as too fat in the show business?"

"Why, Phil Ramsay!" The other man seized Ramsay's hand. "I thought you were the big aviation executive or something in New York."

"The 'or something' is about correct, Sam. We'll pass the rest for the moment. Now that you know who hailed you, d'you mind telling that tug to anchor for awhile? I've got real business for you here!"

"Sure, Phil, sure. Anything for you. I thought when you hailed, you were just some beachcombers working a new racket. Wait here a minute." He gripped his megaphone, motioned the two seamen to come with him, and waddled toward the bow again to hail the tug.

"What's goin' on, anyhow?" asked Bill. "This business's got me dizzy. An' who's yer fat friend that y're so anxious to see, y'go throwin' twenty dollar bills to spigs?"

"You'll know quickly enough," Ramsay replied. "Sam's part owner of this sub. He's Sam Richards—used to be one of the civilian shop superintendents in the Philadelphia Navy Yard. He left that to go into politics. Looks like a politician now, doesn't he? He and some friends of his bought the *S-53* when she was condemned as obsolete and was going to be sold for scrap. Only his political friends managed to persuade the Navy Department, after they'd bought her for a junk price, to allow them to keep her for exhibition purposes only, instead of breaking her up, and so here she is under our feet, the only sub in the world not belonging to somebody's navy—and boys, if you only knew how bad we need her!"

"This ancient remnant of a pigboat?" Bill looked dubiously down the open engine room hatch yawning in the deck before him. "I thought I was through with pigs for ever. What does this collection o' junk mean in our lives now?"

"This pigboat is our last hold on that four million bucks on the *Santa Cruz*. If I don't get this boat from Sam, we can all go selling apples on the Bowery. I thought I was through with pigboats too, Bill, but this one is going to save our bacon!"

Understanding dawned on Bill's face.

"D'y' mean we're not goin' out with just the *Bessie* an' a drag line to fish up that gold?"

Ramsay nodded.

The deep tan of Bill's scorched face seemed to turn a sickly green.

"An' y' mean we're goin' to hire this old sub fer the job an' we gotta operate her *submerged*?"

"That's the idea, Bill!"

"Oh, Lord!" Involuntarily a moan broke from Bill's lips. "First the *Lap-*

*wing,* then that boat without no water, now *this!* Mebbe we oughta commit suicide an' be done with it!" He glanced hurriedly over the periscope shears and the conning tower, then started for the open machinery hatch. "C'mon, Mike, let's see wot we drew. She can't be nothin' but junk, but let's lay below an' see at least if all the pieces 're still there." His burly figure disappeared into the round opening. Mike followed him without a word. And Philip Ramsay, left alone on the narrow deck, looked forward to see the towline slackening and the wake gently dying away. The *S-53* and her towboat had both come to anchor, and from the lee of the conning tower, Richards was beckoning him toward the hatch just forward of it which led to the officers' quarters.

## CHAPTER XI

### CHARTERED

"AND that's that." Sam Richards, looking very fat and very prosperous, with a three carat diamond gleaming in his tie, leaned back in the solitary chair in the little cabin, and looked across at Ramsay hunched on the berth facing him. "Take it or leave it, Phil; it's all the same to me. I can make as much in San Diego. That bonus is what I'm gambling the boat on."

"She's taken, Sam. Write it down. Ten thousand in advance for two weeks; five thousand more left in escrow here, which is yours if we don't come back with the boat; a bonus for you of fifty thousand on our return if we're successful. Is that it?"

"Right, my friend. Where's the money, so I can tell this towboat man his job's off for the present?"

"Here." Ramsay drew out his bankbook. "Come ashore with me and I'll draw it for you. How'll you have it?"

"A bank draft on Los Angeles will suit me fine. I'm not going to hang around Panama with $10,000 in my jeans."

"O. K. Now for a few details, Sam. The crew goes with the boat, I suppose?"

"Yeah, but it's a slim crew, only four men. We tow mostly. My men are paid by the month; but for a special job like this, you'll have to make your own terms. Maybe the job won't look so good to 'em. And once again, Phil, I warn you. I'm under bond to the government on this sub. I can't sell her to a foreign power, and naturally she can't engage in any military activities, or the bond's forfeited. I wouldn't take a chance if it was anybody else. But I'm trusting you a long way. This job you've in mind's nothing like that?"

"Sam, I give you my word it's just like I said, a salvage job on the high seas. But it suits the job better to work from the bottom and not on the surface, so I need a submarine. Of course, like every treasure search, this's got to be kept a secret for our own good, but everything's above board. Come along with us, Sam, and watch it yourself."

"Me go sailing around the bottom of the ocean in this tub?" Sam's rotund face paled. "I'm in the show business, kid, but there's no money in my showing her to the mermaids. The boat's all yours, Phil, when the money's paid."

"It'll be easy," said Ramsay. "One day's work in thirty fathoms on a clear sand bottom and the job's done. Three days to get there, three days to get back, and one day on the job. It'll be all over in a week and you can have your sub back a week ahead of time and no rebate asked. When can I sail?"

"That's up to you, Phil. You get her on practically a bare boat charter, as is, where is, and nothing guaranteed, not even that she'll run except on the end of a towline. Of course," he added, "I think she's all right. I've kept her in good shape for exhibition purposes; ev-

erything we can get at, shined up and clean, and batteries charged up for lighting purposes. A few times we've even run her Diesels to charge batteries, but it costs too much to keep her manned for cruising, so we tow. I have only four men to handle lines and to act as guides to explain things to people when we exhibit. You'll like 'em—all ex-submarine men. I chose 'em myself in Philadelphia when I bought the boat, so they'd know what they were talking about to the visitors. Two of 'em even was in her crew for a long time. Maybe you'll know 'em."

"Perhaps." Ramsay thought it over. Four men aboard already, his gang made five more. A total of eight besides himself. A mighty slim crew for a sub, but considering that the cruise would be practically all on the surface, he ought to get along. Besides, any ordinary sailors such as he might pick up in Panama to fill out would be worse than a total loss in a sub until trained, and he had no time to train anybody. He had to start. He drew out his watch. One o'clock.

"Come on, Sam, let's get ashore and settle this."

AN HOUR later, with his nineteen thousand dollar bank balance shrunk to not much over four thousand dollars, Ramsay returned alone, looking proudly at the *S-53* as he came aboard. The entire crew was lined up as sideboys to pipe him over the side in the best naval style—Bill, Mike, and the four men who belonged to the *S-53*, three by three on each side of the opening in the submarine's rail.

Bill whistled in imitation of a bosun's pipe, then announced:

"Boys, the new skipper, Lieutenant Philip Ramsay, late U. S. N."

Ramsay looked anxiously at his crew.

Bill, interpreting his glance, piped up immediately.

"We're in luck! The crew here's all pigboat sailors an' every one of 'em's had a chief's rate. Cap'n, here's Biff Wolters, Pete Mullaney, Doggy Ingram and Jack Cobb. Biff's a torpedoman, Pete an' Doggy're machinist's mates, Jack's an electrician. An' they've all been in pigs an' nothin' but since the days when the old G-boats were the prides o' the navy, way back before the war. If we gotta go divin' the boat, it's somethin' to feel your shipmates knows their stuff."

Ramsay shook hands. Biff first, a typical seaman, stocky, broad-chested, with hairy arms covered with tattooing. Pete, a solid Irishman, with brawny shoulders and heavy cheek bones all bespeaking brute strength. Doggy, square-jawed, bull-dog faced, a determined look to his stubble-covered chin; and finally Jack Cobb, chief electrician, pleasant of countenance, looking less the sailor than any of them but with an intelligent expression in his wide-set eyes that made Ramsay feel he knew his motors and his batteries.

"I'm glad to know you, men," said Ramsay seriously, "and twice as glad to hear what Bill had to say about you. You're just the guys I need. I've chartered the *S-53* for a couple of weeks; I've got a salvage job to do that involves working her submerged, but it'll pay well. There's a little danger, of course—I don't want you to think there isn't—but it's in operating the boat as a submarine, not in what we're after. You all know the boat better'n I do now; you can size the danger up for yourselves. Mr. Richards tells me he's paying you a hundred a month each and found, and that you're already paid for this month. I want you all to go along on this cruise with me. Win, lose, or draw, for your two weeks work, I'll guarantee you each a month's pay in addition, just so long as we get back at all; and if we're successful, a bonus of five years' pay, that's $6000 to each of you. O. K.?"

"What you-all's got to say sure rings the bell," drawled Doggy, his melodious voice contrasting strangely with his square chin. "I could buy me a chicken farm back in Alabam' an' git me a wife besides to run it for me while I goes fishin'."

"Six thousand dollars? No more showboatin' fer me," exclaimed Mullaney. "With that an' me pension in the Reserve, Maggie an' me can live like kings in Fall River an' niver another stroke o' work. Put me down, Lieutenant."

"Well, that's two," said Ramsay. "How about you, Biff?"

"Well, let's get organized. Bill, you take this bumboat alongside, get ashore, chase up Tom and Joe, and come back with 'em pronto after you've settled our bill at the hotel. And while you're on the beach, make arrangements to ship that diving gear they hired out to the *S-53* right away, all but the hand pump. With all the compressors this boat's got, we won't need that now."

"Aye, aye, sir." Bill scrambled out over the sloping side to the shoreboat waiting there and shoved off. Ramsay turned at once to his new crew.

"Below now, men, all of you. I want

"Oh, I'm not hangin' back, Mr. Ramsay. It's been too damned dull lately just answerin' questions about this boat from all the lubbers from Ioway to Maine. I'd go just fer the excitement of seein' her dive again; not that the money won't come in handy, though."

"And that goes for me too, Cap'n," piped up Cobb. "Six thousand dollars is money in any man's navy."

to go over the boat with you—from stem to stern and from duct keel to bridge!"

ONE by one, the men slipped through the deep coaming forming the round engine room hatch and vanished inside the boat; last of all, Ramsay himself. At the foot of the ladder, he ducked

to clear his head from the lower edge of the coaming, then straightened up inside the brightly lighted room and took a deep breath of the atmosphere, laden with oil fumes and tinged with the slightly acid odor of the escaping gases from the storage batteries.

"Like old times, Mike," remarked Ramsay as he sniffed. "Regular pigboat air." He looked round. Abaft him, starboard and port, were the engines, two six cylinder Diesels, nine hundred horsepower each, filling the room from curving sides of the inner hull almost to the centerline, leaving only a narrow passage amidships, down which, between a maze of cams, springs, rocker arms, and bell-cranks covering the engine cylinders, he could see into the motor room astern. Ramsay turned sidewise and edged aft, stooping under the main air injection valve which filled the whole overhead space in front of the engines. Mullaney followed close behind.

"Good job, Pete," said Ramsay as he noted the gleaming, well oiled valve gear on the engines. "You've certainly kept it in fine shape."

"Thanks, Mr. Ramsay," replied Pete, glowing with pride at the compliment. "Sure, an' what else could I do with 'er? These byes an' girls comin' aboard as visitors, what would they think o' the navy if she wasn't shipshape like a regular pigboat? Them engines still runs good, too. Once a month I charge the batteries with 'em."

"O.K." Ramsay, abaft the engines now, was abreast the clutches. He noted from the indicators that the clutches were in the "Full Out" position, disconnecting the Diesels from the propellers and motors. For towing, that was proper; it allowed instant maneuvering on the electric motors if necessary.

Just abaft the clutches was the watertight bulkhead between the engine and the motor rooms. On the side forward, toward the engines, this circular steel partition was almost hidden from sight by the closely spaced vertical bulkhead stiffeners, heavily built-up steel girders two feet deep, solidly riveted to the bulkhead plates to prevent collapse under the pressure of the deep sea should one of the compartments ever be flooded.

On the centerline, opening aft between two of these stiffeners, was a massively built steel door, small in size, but strongly reenforced to match the bulkhead in strength. Ramsay stooped, with considerable difficulty squeezed himself through the little two by four foot opening, and emerged into the motor room. Cobb sidled past Mullaney and followed his captain.

Beyond the bulkhead, Ramsay looked around. Gone were the smooth steel plates forming the inner skin of the engine room. Here the boat was single hulled; the circular frames girdling the sub stood out like gaunt ribs against the solitary outer shell. But in cleanliness and brightness, the motor room matched the engine compartment, though there seemed to be less machinery and a little more elbow room. Partly visible through openings in the floorplates, starboard and port, were the driving motors for submerged propulsion, two large horizontal cylinders straddling the propeller shafts, with their copper commutators gleaming a bright red beneath the huge carbon brush assemblies.

Ramsay leaned far over, ran his fingers tentatively along a commutator bar. To his surprise, it was in fine shape—the mica on both sides of the bar well undercut and the copper bar itself neither grooved nor ridged at either of its ends. And what he could see of the insulation on the windings was newly lacquered.

Cobb, noting his surprise, explained. "Look too good for an old boat, Captain? Well, it's just been overhauled.

Pete an' me, we had the brushes out a month ago an' we rigged up a cutter to true up the commutators in place. An' while we had 'em exposed, we painted the windings too. You'll find the electrical outfit ready to mote any time you're ready to throw the switches, sir."

Ramsay nodded. Looking around, he checked swiftly the other equipment in the room: the work bench, a lathe, a few other machine tools—and most important of all, the high pressure air-compressor, a motor-driven vertical multistage unit for charging the sub's air banks and in her old days, her torpedoes.

"How's this compressor?" asked Ramsay briefly.

Biff glanced uneasily at Ingram, but answered at last himself.

"Well, Cap'n, I s'pose the compressor's part o' the torpedo outfit, so she's my pidgin, even though we ain't got no torpedoes. To tell the truth, that compressor ain't so hot. If you run it long enough, she'll charge the banks to about 1800 pounds, but as for puttin' 'em up to th' 2400 pounds pressure they're s'posed to have for a full charge, there ain't no hope. The liners 're wore, and the piston rings 're loose. It's the original compressor the boat had when she went in commission, never overhauled since, an' I don't have to tell you what a life one o' them compressors leads in the Navy."

SOBERLY Ramsay regarded the compressor. A well-charged set of air banks was vital before operating submerged; without that, attempting to dive the boat meant certain death if anything went wrong. Still, 1800 pounds was not so bad—a three-quarter charge. Navy rules forbade submerging with less than half a charge, save in the direst wartime emergency, and the *S-53* could exceed that. Overhauling the compressor was a long navy yard job. He made a mental note to check the pressure gauges on the air banks.

"Sounds good enough for our job, boys. We'll need only a few hundred pounds for the divers, and if we make no boners, only next to nothing for anything else. We'll get along. Let's look at the next thing."

He moved aft past the air compressor, which on the outside looked well enough kept, even if it were badly worn inside, and peered through a small round manhole in the circular bulkhead at the rear of the room.

Here, near the stern, the boat tapered rapidly down to a point ending in the after torpedo tube; through that manhole was the tiny steering-gear room, damp, dimly lighted and seldom entered. Ramsay thrust out his arms, and slid head-first through the manhole to the wet floorplates beyond. Here he could not stand; alongside the mechanism of the steering gear for the vertical rudder as well as that for the after horizontal diving planes, there was hardly room for him to crawl.

On his hands and knees, Ramsay examined the machinery. The bearings, the threads, and the gears which made up the intricate steering mechanisms were all well slushed in grease, in spite of the fact that the rest of the room was dripping with moisture from rusty plates and frames. The rust was excusable. Into this room, visitors never came. It was enough of a job, he reflected, for four men to keep the machinery in order. One last look at the stuffing box where the rudder stock came through the hull, to assure himself that there was packing enough to permit tightening down the gland if it leaked when they submerged, and he was satisfied. Feet first, unable to turn around, Ramsay slid backward out the manhole into the comparative spaciousness of the motor room.

With the men in single file behind, Ramsay edged forward through the mo-

tor room into the engine compartment. Then, squeezing between the engines, he continued to the forward partition, where another tiny door gave access to the Central Operating Compartment—the "C.O.C." for short.

"I wasn't exactly built for subs," muttered Ramsay as he contorted his massive frame to squeeze through the opening. He twisted a bit to avoid hitting the operating lever of the clapper valve in the ventilation pipe above the door, and come out into a narrow passage beyond the bulkhead. To starboard was the radio room, hardly more than a thickly insulated cubbyhole packed with radio and hydrophone gear; to port was the ship's galley—an electric range, a sink, a few square feet of deck space for the cook to work in.

He pushed on by and the C.O.C. spread itself suddenly before him—on his left, a maze of dials, pressure gauges, depth gauges, valves, manifolds, a row of levers for operating the Kingston valves—every inch of space from deck to ceiling against the curved inner hull covered with operating and control gear—a dizzying array to contemplate.

Amidships, three periscopes, housed at the moment with their eyepieces hidden in wells beneath the deck, rose like polished steel columns through the C.O.C., with the gyro compass and a steering wheel packed in just forward of them. And covering the whole starboard side of the room, was the switchboard, bright copper switches by the hundreds gleaming against the ebony blackness.

Practically everything on the boat was electrically operated; to this board came the massive cables from the batteries, and from it ran armored cables of every size to serve the myriad motors all over the boat and the lights which made operation possible. A jungle of electric cables spread out from behind the switchboard, running fore and aft against the inner shell; and everywhere leaded and armored cables, carefully threaded through watertight stuffing boxes, preserved the watertight integrity of each separate compartment, wherever a bulkhead was pierced.

Swiftly Ramsay's gaze traveled over the room. All the equipment seemed present; it was all glistening. But would it work? Once more he looked questioningly at the men following him.

"Here's the life blood of running submerged. How'll we be fixed?"

"The most I can say's that the gear's all there, Cap'n," replied Biff, again answering for the others. "We ain't never dived the boat since Mr. Richards bought her. We've operated all the controls once in a while, but she ain't been docked. What shape the Kingston an' the vent valves an' all the piping's in, nobody kin tell you. Nothin's wrong, so far's we know, but there ain't no way o' findin' out how well she works except by divin' her, unless you put the boat in dock an' open everything up—an' you can't do that down here. I guess there's nothin' to it 'cept to pick out a shallow spot an' make a practice dive. Then we'll all know how well she works. But it had better be shallow for the first dive, for it'll do us damn little good in deep water to learn she won't work."

"That's what we'll do," agreed Ramsay heartily. "We'll take a couple of days, pick out a shallow spot where we'll be no more'n awash at low tide and try out everything. Now for the batteries." He eased himself through between the steering wheel and the ladder going to the conning tower above, and squeezed through another small bulkhead door into the battery room which was just forward of the C.O.C. The after part of this compartment was taken up by the officers' messroom and two small staterooms, flimsily built of light sheet metal partitions.

The remainder of the room formed the crew's living space. Normally it

would be jammed with pipe berths for thirty-six men, a solid honeycomb of bunks, three high, three wide, four long, filling the whole space except for a narrow passage running through it. But now, while the vertical pipe stanchions remained, the berths were gone except for one section of nine, which remained as an exhibit and for the use of her much reduced crew.

A RUBBER mat covered the deck. Ramsay threw back the edge at the port side of the room and lifted some portable floorboards. Beneath was one of the storage battery units, a huge lead cell almost two feet square and four feet deep. The terminals and connections were clean and uncorroded. He threw back the filling cap. The liquid inside the cell stood a little above the plates, gassing slightly. Ramsay replaced the cap, noted that the vent connections to the battery exhaust system were in place. If all of the hundred and twenty cells in the boat were like this one which he had chosen at random, he need have no worries about the batteries.

"What do you think of the batteries, Cobb?" asked Ramsay, replacing the floorboards.

"They're in fair shape, Captain," replied the electrician. "I can't get 'em quite up to full capacity; they won't take it, no matter how long I keep 'em on charge, which ain't strange for a set o' battery cells that's run God knows how many cycles on charge an' discharge in their day. But still they'll discharge at maximum rate for nearly an hour, an' that's something for any pig that ain't bran' new. Right as she stands, I'll back her for running submerged against any o' them active S-boats they got stationed in that flotilla at Coco Solo across the isthmus to guard the Canal."

Ramsay reflected. One hour at maximum discharge was the design for the boat; if the *S-69* came anywhere near that, they would be all right. And for some years, the battery had had only light duty; Cobb was probably correct about its being better off than the batteries in the still active S-boats. He was content.

One more room left, the torpedo room. He threaded between the pipe stanchions for the missing berths to the forward bulkhead and looked through the door.

More perhaps than any other place on the boat, the torpedo room positively scintillated. Up in the nose, a nest of four bronze shutters over the torpedo tubes shone brilliantly; the gauges and operating levers surrounding the tubes were all brightly polished; and against the port side of the room, reflecting the light like a mirror, was the solitary torpedo the *S-55* carried for exhibition purposes, its steel cylinder, tapering tail, and tandem propellers all polished up like silverware. Like the motor room in the stern, the torpedo room was single hulled. Here again the steel ribs of the boat were in plain sight, even more prominent than aft, since the racked torpedoes which ordinarily filled both sides of the room were missing, leaving the torpedo room the one comparatively spacious spot on the boat.

"You don't have any armament, I suppose?" asked Ramsay dubiously.

"Not what you'd call armament on a warship," responded Biff. "This torpedo y' see is just a condemned dummy. The guts 're gone outa her tail an' we carry it just for show purposes. An' the navy yard took the four-inch gun off'n the deck before they turned the pig over to us. But we got some small arms. There's a case o' Springfield rifles an' half a dozen Colt automatics locked up in the magazine."

"That's something," Ramsay said. "Let's check the stores. Doggy, you're the cook and steward, I'm told, as well as being a machinist's mate. Go over

your supplies, then lay in what you need for nine men for two weeks and don't skimp on the rations."

"We all been provisioned foah towin' to San Diego," drawled Doggy, "but Ah'll check the beans." He started aft to examine the refrigerated storeroom beneath the C.O.C. floor. Ramsay followed him into the C.O.C., where he paused before the chart table and began to thumb over what appeared to be the log book. He turned to Mullaney.

"How's the boat fixed for fuel, lube oil, and fresh water, Pete? They don't seem to show in this log."

"Sure, an' there's enough lube to take 'er to China if you want to go, an' the water tanks 're full. As for Diesel oil, we don't carry much, since we use it only to charge batteries. On what we got aboard, we'd git not a day's run outa her."

"What's your daily consumption of fuel at twelve knots?"

"About six tons, sir," Pete responded.

Six tons a day. For a two weeks cruise, if they ran all the time at twelve knots as standard speed, that would mean eighty-four tons. As he remembered it, all the boat would carry in her regular oil tanks was about eighty tons. At Zone prices, about $1200 worth of fuel. It would make a bad nick in his remaining bankroll, but it wasn't safe to be caught short of fuel oil around El Morro. He resolved to fill up all the tanks.

## CHAPTER XII

### "TO YOUR STATIONS!"

THE *S-53* lay quietly on the surface of Panama Bay, her conning tower a dark blotch against the dancing waves. It was one A. M.

The oil barge had just shoved off. A hundred yards away, the hollow puffing of its engine rumbled in Ramsay's ears. Below, on the slat deck of the submarine, Mullaney and Joe Hawkins were screwing home the plugs in the filling connections to their fuel oil tanks. Everything was aboard hours ago.

A new reflection, brighter than the moonlight, caught Ramsay's eye. A searchlight, a long pencil of shimmering blue, was swinging across the water from the mast of an approaching vessel. Ramsay took one look only and then ducked his head beneath the rail as the wavering finger of that searchlight lighted on his bridge.

The *Esmeralda* was going out! It was her searchlight, casually sweeping both sides of her path, which had its blinding eye fastened now on the *S-53*, lighting it more brightly than in the noonday sun. From the lee of the periscope shears, Ramsay looked cautiously out, trying to shade his eyes from the searchlight rays, but it was hopeless in that overpowering glare. He ducked again, waited until the *Esmeralda* drew abeam, hardly a hundred yards off, when at last the searchlight swung away, sweeping ahead of the warship for the channel buoys.

Ramsay gazed at the churning wake of the *Esmeralda*. She was sailing much sooner than Garcia had imagined, but otherwise his chance companion on the bench was correctly informed. For the after broadside gun in her port battery was missing. Instead of a long black muzzle looming ominously against the white painted shutter, as in the other side gunports, a red-leaded metal disk closed a hole where the gun should have been. Behind that shutter now, as certain as Fate, was a new air-compressor!

Ramsay scratched his head in dismay, watching the vanishing cruiser. He had expected to run his tests and still arrive at El Morro no later than the *Esmeralda*. He could not afford to allow her too much of a start. She might dis-

cover too much about the *Lapwing* before he got there.

He considered. The *Esmeralda* would probably cruise at fifteen knots; if the *S-53* could make twelve steadily he would be satisfied. On that difference in speed alone the *Esmeralda* would arrive half a day ahead of him, even if he were to start immediately. And if he took the two days, as planned, for the shallow water tests around Panama, he would be entirely too late on the scene.

Regretfully he decided to pass up his shallow water experiments. The *S-53* would have to start at once, and as cautiously as possible, try out her diving gear on the way down. Meanwhile, while they were underway, he could rehearse his men at diving stations, without actually submerging, till they were familiar with the boat.

"All secure, sir." Pete's strong voice broke in on his thoughts. "When do you want the engines in the morning?"

"I've changed my mind, Pete. I want 'em now. We're going to get underway at once, speed ten knots the first hour, and a steady twelve after that. You lay below and get both the Diesels started, Pete. Bill, pass the word to get underway immediately; then get Biff Wolters and both of you stand by the anchor windlass. Send Joe up here to steer; tell Cobb to stand by the main switchboard; send Mike and Doggy aft to help Pete warm up, and Tom to lend Cobb a hand in the C.O.C. till we're out of the harbor."

"Aye, aye, sir!" Bill's pipe began to wail down the open battery room hatch, his rough voice echoed through the semi-darkness below,

"All hands! Rise an' shine!"

SHROUDED inside the high sides of the chariot bridge, only his head and shoulders visible above the rail, Ramsay looked from the deserted deck of the submarine to the figure of Joe Hawkins before him, ready to steer her out. He saw the bow of the *S-53* start to drift slowly to port. The anchor was aweigh.

"Half ahead, both engines, Joe!"

The water astern churned up. The *S-53* slowly gathered speed, started to glide smoothly through the harbor.

"Standard speed!"

Joe nodded, repeated the order into the voice tube. Immediately, a deeper roar, strangely hollow like a drum, sounded from the exhausts, and the submarine quivered as she picked up speed. Ramsay lifted his glasses, began to search out the channel buoys glistening in the moonlight, referring occasionally to the chart, while in monosyllables he conned the ship out and Joe steered.

The first rays of the new day found them well at sea in the broad Gulf of Panama, with the Pearl Islands dimly visible off the port beam. Only the open ocean was ahead.

At six A.M., Ramsay set the watch for cruising, three men only. The rest of his crew, led by the dead-tired Pete, straggled into the battery room, where, clothes and all, they rolled into their bunks. Ramsay, after a last look around the brightly lighted C.O.C., pushed aside the green baize curtain to the captain's stateroom and crawled into the berth. Immediately his knees folded up against his stomach. With a sigh, Ramsay closed his eyes. When he got his hands on that gold, he reflected, the first thing

he was going to get was a man's sized bed to carry with him whenever he traveled. But in spite of the cramped quarters, the even pounding of the engines soon lulled his tired nerves and he quickly fell asleep.

The fragrant odor of coffee woke him up. Lumberingly he extracted his huge body from the bunk to face Joe Hawkins, balancing a heavy cup and saucer and a plate of ham and eggs.

"Thanks, Joe." Ramsay splashed his face with cold water, then turned hastily to his breakfast. "What time is it, and how 're we getting along?"

"Four bells, Cap'n, an' everything runnin' like a clock, steady on sou' by west with nothin' in sight. But the boys 're a little worried about divin' the boat. We ain't tested her, you know."

"Uh huh." Ramsay was busily engaged with the eggs. "Let's talk about that later," he mumbled between bites. "Ever gnaw on raw potatoes for breakfast, Joe? Yeah? Well, tell Doggy for me, he's the best cook in the fleet."

Seated in the battery room crew space, the men off watch were gathered for breakfast. At Joe's entrance, the men round the table looked up anxiously.

"Well, Joe," asked Biff, "how'd the old man take it about the diving tests?"

Joe sank down on the bench next to Bill with a grimace.

"I guess we take life in these pigboats too serious, boys. I asked the cap'n about them shallow water trials, like I promised you I would, an' he sez he ain't never had finer eggs for breakfast. What d'y' make o' that?"

"Only that the skipper ain't worryin' none—an' if he ain't, why should I?" asked Bill. "We're all in the same boat." He shoved his plate toward Cobb. "Say, Sparks, decorate this plate with another pair o' eggs an' some more ham. I must be hungrier 'n I thought."

"Bill's right," put in Joe. "The skipper knows his stuff. Ain't we been with him long enough to see that? 'Member how he saved us, Bill, when we were about passin' out in that sailin' launch?"

"Yeah?" broke in Pete, "From all yuh say about th' skipper, I'll believe he knows his stuff well enough, but how about the rest of us? Do we know ours? How long's it been since one o' you has felt a pig goin' awash beneath your feet an' the whistlin' of air out the vents? Things happen fast aboard one o' these pigs, an' it takes only one boner on the part of any one of us to settle the hash for the whole crowd. It ain't the skipper, its us an' the boat that's got me worried."

RAMSAY'S head popped out through the curtained opening, shoulders stooped low to clear the ventilator main overhead. A sudden silence, except for the throbbing of the Diesels, fell on the battery room.

"Morning, boys," called Ramsay genially. "All hands shaken down for the cruise by now?"

A ragged chorus of assent answered him.

"That's fine, then. We've got about a thousand miles to the south to do. We can't do any actual submerging on the run down, because the bottom's too far away from the surface. When we dive the boat the first time, I'm going to be sure there's something to stop us if anything goes wrong, before she sinks to a depth that'd crush the boat. That means not over three hundred feet, and preferably not over two hundred.

"This is a hell of a coast for subs; it's not like the Atlantic, where there's a wide shelf running miles off shore with only a moderate depth. On this side, she runs off steeply close to the beach and the hundred fathom curve's not far offshore. On most of this cruise we're over water so deep that a boat sinking out of control will collapse under the sea pressure long before she hits bottom.

"But the chart shows one shoal spot

north of El Morro; it varies between twenty and fifty fathoms of water over it. We'll do our first submerging there. Meanwhile we'll have a couple of days before we get there to try out the gear, valve by valve, and make sure it's working; and particularly we'll run station drills for diving without actually flooding her, so each of us'll get a good chance to learn his job. Here's the station bill for diving." Ramsay drew from his pocket a sheet of paper, faced his little crew. "We're short-handed, you all know that. Some of you'll have two or three jobs in succession, but they'll fit in.

"Joe, you're first." He looked at Hawkins, balancing himself uneasily against the swinging mess table. "Joe, the C.O.C.'s your station when we dive. Two jobs for you. First, swing home the main air inlet valve to the ventilation system, then man the control wheel for the after diving rudders. That big vent valve's got to be shut before we're awash, and the diving rudder's no good until after we're submerged, so those two two jobs don't conflict. You get it?"

"Aye, aye, sir. I know 'em both. The main air inlet valve's aft, overhead in the C.O.C.; I close that as we're goin' awash, then move over and run the after diving wheel when we're submerged. I done that in these pigs hundreds o' times.

"Good. Bill, you're next. Before submerging you check the hatches forward to see they're closed, then man the bow diving rudder wheel in the C.O.C. We're not going to make any crash dives, so you'll have lots of time to close the hatches—but you're to check each time, savvy?"

"Aye, aye, sir. See all for'd hatches are closed an' dogged, then run the bow plane control. That's easy. But how about closin' the connin' tower hatch here amidships? That part o' my job?"

"No, Bill, I'll close the lid in the conning tower myself the last thing as the hull goes awash. Don't you worry about that one. Now, Mullaney," he faced for the moment one of the men new to him, "you've been in pigs a long time?"

"Yes, the worse luck,' answered Pete. "Ever since the war, when I was with a Lieutenant Knowles in the *L-20*, an' we was sunk by a Heinie ash can. Biff here, he was with me. We nearly died there in that *L-20* in the mud, what with more ash cans explodin' all around us as the Heinies tried to finish the job, and the boat a mess inside. How our skipper ever got the boat up when the Heinies finally decide the job's done an' lift, is still a wonder to me. We were two of the five survivors out a crew of thirty. Yeah, I been with the pigs through lots."

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"I'll say you have!" exclaimed Ramsay with interest. "So you and Biff were in the *L-20,* eh? I remember that case. In the North Sea, wasn't it, right off Helgoland?" Pete nodded. "Well, it's peace time now, Pete, and no more depth bombs to worry about at any rate. It's plain enough you ought to know these boats, so I'll give you the main job of sinking her. You man the Kingston valves, Pete, and flood the ballast tanks when you get the word to dive. You've done that before?"

"I know the job well."

"Fine! Now, Tom'll run the vents for submerging, then steer afterward. He's on watch now, so I'll tell him later. Cobb, your station's obvious. You man the switchboard and run the controls for the electric motors for submerged operation. That clear?"

"Aye, aye, Captain." Cobb nodded confidently. Ramsay smiled at him. No worries about the electrical end.

"Doggy and Mike will man the engine room, close the main air induction valve to the engines, secure the muffler stop valves, unclutch the Diesels, check the after hatches, and secure the various circulating water valves. They're both on watch now, so I'll see 'em later. And now," he consulted his station bill again, "that leaves you as the last man, Biff. Your job's the compressed air manifold, the trimming tanks for'd and aft, and the adjusting tanks amidships. You know 'em all, Biff?"

"Yeah," responded Wolters dubiously. "I know 'em all, Cap'n, but that's a lotta territory—the whole boat from bow to stern—for one man to cover in a hurry if something's wrong."

"Right, Biff, but don't worry; it'll be practically all in the C.O.C. We'll get the trim right with the bow and stern tanks on the first dive. I'll help you. After that, there'll be little reason ever to change the trim, and your main job then'll be balancing buoyancy with the adjusting tank in the C.O.C. and standing by the compressed air manifold to blow tanks in an emergency, if we have to." He paused a moment, then added, "That's everybody except me. I'll man the periscope. Now above everything else, get this, each one of you! Check over what's near you in the way of gauges, valves, or controls! The nearest man'll have to handle anything within his reach in a pinch—without orders, maybe. There's not men enough aboard to cover all the little things as a separate billet for someone, so we'll all have to spread ourselves. But think first, boys, before you yank the wrong control—or we'll all be a long time dead!"

Soberly the men before him nodded. No need to impress on them the necessity for care. Long years in operating pigs, from the days of the little single-hulled two and three hundred tonners like the tricky D, E, and F boats, had taught them that. A moment of carelessness and the boat was gone. That was the story through a long line of submarine disasters, starting with the little *F-4* off Honolulu in 1915, the first American sub lost, down to the modern *S-4,* four times as large, lost off Provincetown in 1927—both of them, and many more in between, gone to be recovered months later manned only by corpses.

These men before him remembered well. Most of those lost had been more than just names to the sailors gathered round that mess table in the *S-53*; they had been flesh and blood shipmates of more fortunate days on other pigs; good men like themselves, who knew their jobs. Only they were dead now. Amidst the steady throbbing of the Diesels, the little knot of seamen on the *S-53* quietly pondered that fact.

Ramsay broke the silence.

"Let's go, men. On your stations now and get acquainted. As soon as I've posted the men on watch where they're to go, we'll hold the first drill. Signals by klaxon. Only you're just to go through the motions and report, ex-

cept for the engines. Don't actually open or close anything on the ballast tanks."

"Aye, aye, sir!" The men before him dispersed.

RAMSAY clambered up to the deck above. Involuntarily, as his shoulders cleared the coaming, he took a deep breath of the salt air sweeping by, a strong relief from the mixture of fumes he had been breathing below while he slept.

The slender form of the *S-53* was rising and falling gracefully to the seas, her sharp prow slicing neatly through the waves. Abaft him, the conning tower, crowned with the tiny chariot bridge, rose from the deck, an insignificant, streamlined superstructure designed mainly to minimize resistance when submerged. Ramsay looked at it, at the broad immensity of ocean stretching in all directions to the far circle of the horizon, shook his head solemnly as he scanned his craft. There was so little to a submarine, even a large one like the *S-53*, compared to the ocean she had to combat.

"Mornin', Cap'n."

Tom Williams, nearly filling the space inside the rounded chariot, turned from steering to greet him as he squeezed through between the periscope shears and the side of the bridge and came out over the roof of the conning tower.

"Good morning, Tom."

From the highest part of the submarine, jammed against Tom between binnacle and periscope, Ramsay looked aft briefly. A light smoke was pulsing from the muffler exhausts, drifting lazily aft above the water. Ramsay nodded approvingly. Combustion was excellent; their Diesels were evidently getting everything in the way of power from each gallon of oil burned. He turned after a moment to Tom, explained to him his station, then took the steering himself.

"I'm afraid, Tom, this bridge wasn't laid out for two like us. You lay below to the engine room and pass the word to Doggy and Mike about their diving stations. And I guess when I'm on the bridge hereafter, I'll have to see that somebody small like Joe's on watch here, so there'll be room for the two of us to breathe. Now, Tom, I'll give you a few minutes to explain; then we'll sound the warning signal and take stations."

The minutes drifted by, the *S-53* plowed steadily onward through the sea. After a quarter of an hour, Ramsay judged the time had come. He reached over, pressed a button secured alongside the binnacle.

The raucous clamor of the klaxons burst out below, cutting sharply through the din of the engines. For another moment, he held down the button, while the wail of the klaxons rose to an almost unbearable pitch, then let go.

Instantly things began to happen on the *S-53*.

Forward and aft, unseen hands gripped the open hatch covers and slammed them down, sealing the entrances to the hull. Inside the periscope shears abaft him, Ramsay could hear the screech of the valve stem to the main ventilation valve as it dragged home, while below in the C.O.C., Joe swung the operating lever. A little grease on that stem would do no harm, reflected Ramsay.

And then a different note came into the vibrations of the hull; the clutches had been disconnected, the boat was driving ahead on its electric motors while the engines idled. Another moment and the pounding of the Diesels ceased altogether. Silence, strange after the long continued pounding of the Diesels, gripped the boat.

Ramsay took a last glimpse around the horizon. No vessel in sight anywhere to worry about. Swiftly he shut off the voice tubes, slid his feet through the hatch and squeezed his shoulders through the small opening into the con-

ning tower. His left hand gripped the lanyard on the under side of the lid. With a jerk he slammed it down, noted that latch had caught, that the rubber gasket all around was pressing on the circular knife-edge. Without a pause, he continued down through the lower hatch of the conning tower into the C.O.C. itself, squeezing through and as a precaution, closing also and latching the lower lid between the conning tower and the C.O.S. itself.

As his feet came down the vertical ladder to the deck, Ramsay's ears caught the echo of the oldest submarine order when diving.

"Silence in the boat!"

That was from Tom, his leading chief petty officer. A glow of satisfaction flooded Ramsay. His men had not forgotten their old technique.

Silently and swiftly, hurrying feet scurried around the C.O.C. Ramsay peered aft to the engine room, caught the slam of the main air induction valve to the Diesels as they closed, then saw Mike running aft between the engines to help Doggy screw home the muffler stops. Turning back to the C.O.C., he took station just abaft the forward periscope and pressed the hoisting button. Slowly, the polished cylinder before him began to rise until, clearing the floor, the eye-piece came head high and stopped. Ramsay swiftly folded down the rotating handles, took a perfunctory look out, and then again concentrated on the C.O.C. Reports started to break in from all sides.

"Driving one-quarter speed ahead on the main motors!" That was Cobb at the main switchboard.

"Stern diving planes ready!"

"Bow diving planes ready!"

Joe at the after diving wheel, Bill at the forward one, were looking at him from alongside the huge depth gauges there over the port.

"Engines all secured, *sir*!" Doggy, with his sweaty head poked through from the engine room, reported briefly.

"Main ballast Kingstons all open!" called Pete from in front of his row of levers, in pantomime going through the motions. "Only of course they ain't really. They're all closed tight."

Ramsay nodded. The sub should be sinking now. In a moment, carrying out the drill, Tom called out:

"Ballast tank vents all closed. Telltales show each tank flooded. I'm shutting 'em off." Tom went over the little indicator valves as if closing them.

Ordinarily now the boat would be completely awash, with the conning tower nearly under, if he had the trim and the buoyancy correct, and the boat as a whole would be just a trifle too buoyant to sink further of itself. It would be up to the diving rudders to plane her under and hold her at whatever depth he chose to operate.

Ramsay looked round briefly. Each man was on his station. Satisfied, he ordered:

"Secure! Get back to surface operation on the Diesels. We won't use any more juice than we have to."

In a few minutes, with hatches and air intakes opened, the *S-53* was once more pulsating to the rhythm of her engines.

AND so for two days the submarine drove on to the southward, with her speed stepped up to fourteen knots, practically the maximum which her eighteen hundred horsepower oil engines could deliver. The machinists, watching anxiously for signs of overheated bearings, urged running at more moderate speed, but Ramsay was obdurate. He must not allow, if he could help it, the *Esmeralda* to get too much of a start on him.

Meanwhile, one by one, on every man's station, he went over the flood valves, the tank vents, the trim manifolds, the blowers, the pumps, actually

operating each with its normal controls to make sure it worked; though each Kingston valve could be opened only for a second before it had to be closed again to avoid filling a ballast tank and giving the boat a bad list or a trim or both. To Ramsay's intense gratification, everything worked—stiffly at first, to be sure, but it worked. After two days of liberal use of a grease gun and an oil can on bearings, everything moved with reasonable freedom.

And at least once each watch during the daylight hours, at unexpected times, the diving horns shrieked out and the crew went through the routine of submerging and coming up until Ramsay was satisfied that each man thoroughly knew his job. And he himself labored late into the night, filling sheet after sheet with computations, figuring the water necessary to carry in the trim tanks forward and aft to compensate for the absent torpedoes, and more particularly determining that the pig lead ballast added under the gun platform in the superstructure was properly corrected, both in weight and in moment, for the gun which had been removed from the forecastle.

Finally he was satisfied, the water in the trimming tanks set to suit, and the lead pigs, which had been thrown helter-skelter in beneath the gun platform, were carefully restowed by opening up the portable deck sections around the gun and laying out the ballast securely along the centerline.

Marked by pin pricks on the chart, each point surrounded by a small circle with hour and date marked alongside, the track of the *S-53* lengthened out, a thin pencil line south by west from Panama, until in longitude 82° W., it crossed the Equator. Then that pencil line traced due south until, at 6° S. latitude, it changed again to south by east, pointed for El Morro Island, and ended at their 8 A.M. position that day. They were off the coast of Peru now, still three hundred miles north of their destination, but only a two hours' run now from the solitary shoal spot along the coast.

Carefully he checked his sights to establish his position. That bank, probably the cone of an extinct volcano, was only a couple of miles long and not much wider. No very large area. Its position also was perhaps a little uncertain—no hydrographic survey would be

any too exact in locating anything on the chart with that much water over it. Still, it would be comfortable to have that plateau beneath him when he tried diving the boat. He plotted his course a little more to the westward to carry him exactly across the center of that isolated shoal, which rose steeply from the depths with the soundings all around it two thousand fathoms or more—over two miles deep.

For the last time, he went over his navigational note book. The latitude he was certain of—his last noon shot of

the sun was excellent. But longitude was a different story. He was none too sure of the rate of the solitary chronometer the *S-53* carried, and in the bustle of diving practise, he had neglected to have Cobb catch any of the time signals by radio. Still, his star sights at dawn and at eight A.M., when he shot the sun for longitude, all agreed well; he ought to be right on longitude within half a mile. And that was enough.

At 10:15 the sub would be over the edge of the shoal; at 10:23, if they kept their speed, they would be over it and in deep water again on its southern side. Anxiously Ramsay looked from the chart tacked down on a board alongside the binnacle, to his watch. 10:10. Five minutes to go. He might as well get ready.

"Steer from below, Joe. I'll keep a lookout here. And pass the word to all hands to stand by. And this time, when the signal comes—no more make-believe. This time the boat dives!"

WITH eyes glued now to his watch, Ramsay waited as the seconds ticked off. A little nervously, he shut off the plug valves in the voice tubes, wondered if they would stay tight under pressure. After all, the *S-53* was an old boat which had not been submerged for perhaps five years. What was he in for when the pressure of the deep sea once again struck the maze of valves on which he must rely to hold the boat tight?

10:15. The time had come. Firmly his hand shot out, pressed the button. The shriek of the klaxons answered him.

Almost immediately the throbbing of the Diesels stopped; an eerie quiet fell on the boat. But only for a moment. Diving was real now. Ramsay, watching from the bridge, saw the deck hatches slam shut. An odd roaring, as from a dozen deep-toned whistles, filled the air and the *S-53* began to tremble under his feet. The Kingston valves were opening, the ballast tank vents were open, and that whistling was the air escaping from the ballast tanks as the water, flooding in, began to sink the boat.

Higher and higher the waves lapped up round the steel hull as the *S-53* settled, driving slowly ahead now on her electric motors. A sudden lurch, and the boat rocked an instant unsteadily; the water rose half a foot almost in no time. Ramsay, his teeth set, nodded grimly. The sea outside had just flooded into the non-watertight upper hull over the flat tops of the side ballast tanks, suddenly reducing the sub's waterplane and momentarily wiping out her slight stability. That point they must pass through quickly or the boat might capsize. No time to waste now. Everything wide open to sink her rapidly.

With satisfaction he watched the water rapidly climbing the superstructure sides and rising toward the deck. Good. Below, Pete and Tom were flooding and venting the ballasts with no hesitations. The water washed up over the flat deck at the stem; the bow trimmed slightly down and started to plane under as she drove ahead. Nothing left now above the waves but the conning tower and the periscope shears, and soon those would go awash. It was time to leave.

Precipitantly he jammed himself down the hatch into the conning tower, scraping a button off his jacket in the process, then breathed a sigh of relief as he slammed the lid and heard it latch down, sealing the last opening on the boat. As his feet fumbled through the lower hatch for the ladder to the C.O.C., through the little glass eyeports in the thick sides of the tower, his eyes caught nothing now but solid water. The conning tower was awash.

He squeezed on through the lower hatch into the C.O.C., his head clearing the coaming. Still on the ladder, he paused a second to look around before descending. The whistling of air out of

the vents was dying away—the ballast tanks were now practically flooded. The needles on the wide dials of the depth gauges were slowly but steadily creeping around the scales as the boat sank. The water was just over the top of the conning tower. In another moment the *S-53* would be submerged.

Silent, tense, he saw his men, each at his station, hands gripping his controls, eyes fixed on the tell-tale dials. All was well. Ramsay relaxed his grip on the top rung of the ladder, felt tentatively with his left toe for the deck beneath.

And then, suddenly paralyzed with horror, he saw a huge stream of water, at least a foot in diameter, come shooting downward under high pressure into the C.O.C., flooding the deck, spraying with solid water the men at the controls!

Too petrified to move, as his agonized eyes sought the source, Ramsay's heart went suddenly cold. Joe Hawkins, standing there gripping the after diving wheel, had forgotten the first part of his own job. There abaft the after periscope, through the wide open ventilation valve, the largest in the boat, the ocean was pouring into the submarine.

## CHAPTER VIII

### GOLDEN LURE

"IT does not so well suit you then, Señor Sorensen?" Lieutenant Sanchez waved at the ring of mooring buoys surrounding the *Esmeralda*. "Well, it is the best we can do. *La Esmeralda*, she is a cruiser, not a salvage ship. We use what we can get."

"Ay tal you, dose four anchors not heavy enough. For dat *Lapwing*, yes, but *Esmeralda* ban ofer twice as big. Come a blow, dose moorings can't hold such a large ship. Ay ban fallar inside dat wreck on de bottom. It ban my airhose which gets broke if *Esmeralda* drags anchors und swings avay from ofer dat wreck, und it ban Nils who chokes to death down dere. Yust you put out more anchors or you can dive yourself. Ay no go down."

With considerable labor, using every hour of the first day since her arrival, the *Esmeralda* had one by one picked up the four mooring buoys and the three-ton anchors attached to them, which the *Lapwing* had originally laid out around the *Santa Cruz*. These moorings had been replanted by the *Esmeralda* in a circle around the buoy marking the grave of the *Lapwing* herself. There they floated, four gaudily striped spars dancing among the waves, with heavy eight-inch manila hawsers radiating like the spokes of a wheel across the water from the *Esmeralda* at the hub to the buoys out on the rim; four hawsers looking strong enough to Sanchez to hold the ship in any blow.

But Sorensen, veteran of many a rough day over the wreck of the *Santa Cruz*, disagreed violently. These naval officers knew little, really, of fixed moorings. They were accustomed to anchoring, whether with one anchor only or perhaps with two on a bridle (which they called mooring) and then to let the ship swing as she would to wind and sea, always heading into the resulting forces so as to exert the least drag on the anchor.

But mooring for a dive was different; the ship must be placed fixed over the wreck—and after that, while a diver was on the bottom, stay that way, come hell or high water. All salvage men knew that.

Sorensen's blue eyes looked coolly into the flushed face of the *Esmeralda's* executive officer as he repeated:

"You run out more anchors, lak Ay tal you, or Ay no dive!"

With an effort, Sanchez restrained himself from ordering a squad of marines to clap this insubordinate seaman into the brig. After all, he reflected, he was in Sorensen's hands. If that defiant Swede before him didn't dive, he, Carlos

Sanchez, who on the strength of Sorensen's story had persuaded the Minister of Marine to detach the *Esmeralda* for this service, to spend thousands of *soles* for that air-compressor, for that queer recompression tank lashed down on the quarterdeck, for diving gear—he would be the laughing stock of Lima.

And there was no way out. The few men in his own service who passed for divers had never been below a hundred feet; it was hopeless to expect any of them to risk their necks in a wreck at over twice that depth. No, it was Sorensen or no one.

"*Muy bien, señor;* as you wish it." He motioned to the officer of the deck, spoke rapidly in Spanish, then turned back to Sorensen.

"We will unmoor, steam ahead a few ship lengths, drop our starboard anchor, then back down over this spot again while we veer cable, and moor once again with the hawsers. And in addition, we will plant a kedge on each beam. But meanwhile we lose another valuable day from diving while we do all this. However, does it satisfy you?"

Sorensen looked at the kedge anchors lashed against the buff superstructure. Eight thousand pound stockless anchors those were, kedges perhaps, but really spare bower anchors. He had already furtively investigated them. With the bower anchor out and those two as extra moorings, there would be seven lines out to hold the ship.

"Yah," he nodded.

"*Muy bien.*" Sanchez nodded to the officer of the deck. Immediately the ship resounded to the piping of bosun's mates and the scurrying feet of the crew, preparing to unmoor and lay out the additional anchors.

BUT Nils Sorensen, lolling against the breech of the after six-inch gun, had other worries to concern him. Two weeks' association with the officers and crew of the *Esmeralda* had impressed him more than anything else with their excitability. If there was one quality that divers and their tenders needed above all others, it was calmness. But he had no faith at all now in expecting calm judgment from any one on the *Esmeralda*, not even excepting Sanchez.

Two hundred and ten feet down, to work on a wreck under God knew what conditions—and not an officer, not a man on deck, who had any experience in tending a diver, in decompressing him, in helping him to extricate himself if he got fouled in the wreck! Sorensen's fingers itched as he thought of the four millions in gold stored inside the *Lapwing's* forehold, waiting for him there at the bottom of the sea; of the hundred thousand dollars of it which was to be his in return for his information and his work in salvaging the treasure.

But—two hundred and ten feet of ocean rolled between him and that gold! And the skill on the topside, that teamwork of supervision and of tending which on the *Lapwing* he had taken as a matter of course, was now replaced by a lot of spigs, for whose competence he had only contempt.

Sorensen's blue eyes narrowed as he pondered. Arenda could do the job, but would he? Perhaps, if the spigs could be persuaded to commute his sentence to imprisonment rather than death. Slowly Sorensen, never too quick in thought, rolled the matter over and over in his mind, while Sanchez was maneuvering the boat crane in lowering into a motor launch the first of the kedge anchors.

But could he bind Sanchez there, or his superiors back in Lima, to stand by his promise of freedom when the task was done? However, why should he bother? He could make the promise; if back in Lima the promise was not kept, that would be Arenda's funeral, not his. Barefooted, Sorensen padded across the quarterdeck, down the after hatch. At the foot of the ladder was the passage

before the admiral's cabin. With no flag officer aboard on this cruise, the unoccupied cabin was being used only for the *Esmeralda's* high ranking prisoner. The marine sentry, after a cursory glance, stepped aside. This Swede, as he well knew, was the man around whom all the ship's movements centered.

Sorensen, without knocking, entered, planted himself directly in Arenda's path and bluntly burst out:

"*Capitán*, yust you help me now a little an' Ay get for you a pardon!"

"A pardon? For helping you?" Arenda's eyes blazed momentarily at the insult, then blinked rapidly as wonder got the better of his wrath. This mutinous seaman coming to him now with an olive branch? Sorensen must decidedly be up against it for that to happen. "And what ees eet I must do for thees pardon?" asked Arenda mildly.

Sorensen's heart leaped. Arenda was evidently interested. Who wouldn't be, as an alternative to the firing squad?

"An easy yob. Yust you tend my lifelines vile Ay dive for dat gold on de *Lapwing*, an' you run my decompression ven Ay come up."

Don Diego stared at him.

"You know what you ask, Sorensen? That I should help you, help my enemies in Lima to salvage anything from the *Lapwing*? *Sangre de Cristo*, no! But from other considerations, perhaps after all I should tend you. As your tender, I can keel you and to all these fools on the *Esmeralda* eet ees only a sad accident. How? You know well enough! Your wet lifelines slip from my hands, you fall to the bottom; or perhaps I fix it so your helmet leaks: in either way a "squeeze" makes jelly of you. Or I am careless in your decompression; the "bends" finish you. An accident, of course. And you ask me to tend you? You wish to commit suicide, *si*?"

"No." Slowly Sorensen shook his head. "Ay ban going to trust you. You

say you do dat yob, an' Ay no ban fallar to vorry den ofer you keep your vord."

Arenda laughed mirthlessly. "So you have no tenders who know how, unless I help you? *Muy bien*, I am glad to hear that. Then you do not dive, for only thees I promise you, and as a man of honor, I shall keep my promise." Arenda's eyes narrowed and his voice rose shrilly. "You murderer! Eef I tend you, you pay on the first dive for what already has happened on the *Lapwing*! I'll see a 'squeeze' keels you, but not too fast, so first your stomach pushes up into your lungs, slowly, slowly, so you do not die at once; then the sea presses your body up into your helmet till you are completely jelly. When you are hauled up, it will take a spoon, *sí*, to dig you out of your helmet! You still want me for a tender? *Madre de Dios*, to me eet will be a pleasure to execute you before I die myself!" Arenda's dark eyes fastened themselves on Sorensen. "Señor Sorensen, I am ready. How soon do you wish to dive?"

SHAKING visibly from the picture Arenda had painted, Sorensen thrust aside the flap on the canvas canopy and came out on deck. Arenda would be as good as his word. And he, Nils, was a fool ever to have asked him. But the problem of the tender still remained.

Who else, then? He *must* have a competent tender. And not far off there was half a dozen of them. Speculatively his eyes wandered to the distant pinnacle of El Morro. Somewhere among the palms were his ex-shipmates, marooned by Ramsay the night he quelled the mutiny.

When last he had seen them, he, Sorensen, a tightly-bound prisoner himself, had been threatened by them with all sorts of lingering tortures when they got their hands on him. But now, he reflected, the shoe was on the other foot. After two weeks on El Morro subsisting on fruits or on raw turtle meat, the castaways would fall on his neck as their savior if he promised nothing more than just to take them off.

He made up his mind. He needed only a boat and a well-armed landing party to pick them up while Sanchez was getting out the new moorings. Only one hook to the scheme, though. They might well stay hidden in the bush, shy of a boat from a warship, figuring it had come to punish them for mutiny. But Francisco, marooned there with the others, was Peruvian; he would understand the situation well enough to know that if the *Esmeralda* had chased and sunk the *Lapwing*, she was no enemy of theirs.

And if he, Nils, could only get one of them within hail, he would quickly calm any fears. Done. He scanned the quarterdeck. There was Sanchez, leaning over the starboard rail, anxiously watching the heavy anchor hanging from the crane, poised over the motor launch alongside, ready to be lowered. Sorensen sauntered toward him, touched him on the shoulder.

Sanchez, taut with the fear of seeing the crane man make a mistake with his brake, and send the four-ton anchor crashing down through the bottom of the boat, started as if stabbed, burst out angrily:

"You again? What else now?"

Sorensen prudently kept his thoughts to himself. As briefly as possible he explained his desire to rescue his ex-shipmates, diplomatically leaving it on that ground only.

"*Mil diablos!*" exclaimed the harassed executive officer. "Is that all? Tell the officer of the deck to give you a boat, any boat! Only leave me alone till I am finished with these heavy anchors, which, to calm your fears about your own skin, I must risk killing a whole boat's crew laying out! *Si! Vaya con Dios!* Take the boat, go ashore, go anywhere you wish!" Abruptly he spun on his heel, turned outboard once more, eyes fixed on that massive anchor swaying from the crane hook.

(TO BE CONTINUED)

FRIED-POTATOES AND STEAK GET MY STOMACH UP-SET!
ALKA-SELTZER, MY BOY, LET'S YOU EAT AND FORGET
ACID-INDIGESTION
YOU NEVER CATCH COLD. ARE YOU LUCKY OR WISE?
I THINK I'M BOTH, I ALKALIZE!
COLDS
MY HEAD ACHES SO, I CAN HARDLY SEE!
TWO ALKA-SELTZERS DID WONDERS FOR ME.
HEAD-ACHE
Be Wise— Alkalize
Alka-Seltzer
Alka-Seltzer Makes a sparkling alkalizing solution containing an analgesic (acetyl salicylate). You drink it and it gives prompt, pleasant relief for Headaches, Sour Stomach, Distress after Meals, Colds and other minor Aches and Pains.
Alkalize with Alka-Seltzer
AT ALL DRUGGISTS
30¢-60¢
TUNE IN THE NATIONAL BARN DANCE SATURDAY NIGHT NBC NETWORK

# NIGHT SERVICE

by L. W. CLAFLIN

IT WAS just after midnight when the service bell rang and the big night light spread a red glow over the spacious interior of the garage.

Vander lay under a car picking pieces of scored babbit out of a dirty crankcase. He relaxed in his slatted creeper and wiped his hands leisurely on a piece of waste. With the knuckle of his forefinger he nudged a speck of dirt from the corner of one eye.

"Damn these guys that run out of gas after midnight!"

He jammed his rubber heels against the floor and wheeled himself out from under the car. The bell was ringing again, and overhead the night light flashed red.

He got up slowly. Stuffing the dirty waste into his pocket, he sauntered down the floor between two rows of cars. They stood facing each other all the way down, their unlighted headlamps like so many pairs of dead eyes. He whistled a slow tune. The sound echoed emptily against the high, girdered roof.

The night service entrance was a narrow door set in one of the big main doors. It was just large enough to admit one person at a time. Vander kept it bolted when he was alone. There was money in the office safe and three thousand dollars worth of parts in the stock room.

He slipped back the bolt and pulled open the door. Outside, the wind blew raw and cold. A man squeezed through the small opening, head lowered between

hunched shoulders, hands thrust into his overcoat pockets.

Inside he straightened up, tapped one cold foot against the other, and exhaled sharply. Vander shut the door against the wind and bolted it.

"Colder'n hell," he commented.

The other ignored this. He fixed on Vander a pair of hard, black eyes centered with little pinpoints of light.

"You the night man?" he asked.

"Yes. I'm him. What's wanted?"

The black eyes searched the place swiftly. Finally—

"You in here alone?"

"Maybe. What's wanted?"

"Service. Allowed to go out and leave the place?"

Vander hesitated.

"Sure. I s'pose I can if I have to. What's wrong?"

The tall man jerked his head up in a swift nod.

"Get some tools and come on."

"Okay," Vander agreed. "What's happened?"

"Whadda you care? Quit stalling and let's go."

Vander studied him, his eyes narrowing. He asked coldly—

"What kind of a game is this?"

"Game? Whadda you mean?"

"Just this: I've asked you twice what happened. Is it a secret?"

"What if it is?"

"I don't like the sound of it, that's what."

"Oh, you don't, huh?"

"No. So you can either come across with the facts, or get the hell out of here and chase up some other night service."

The big man glared, rage smoldering in his black eyes. He took a short, quick step forward. He said in a tight voice—

"Like that, huh?"

"Yeah. Just like that."

Suddenly he jerked a huge black-gloved fist out of his overcoat pocket.

"Maybe a crack in the head would change your mind."

Vander's hands clenched slowly. He said evenly—

"I'll leave that up to you, wise guy, if you want to take that way of finding out."

They stood tense, each watching for the first move. Finally Vander said—

"How about it, tough guy? What's wrong with the car?"

The big man hesitated. Then sullenly—

"It won't steer."

"Uh-huh. Anything else?"

"No, damn you, that's all. I told you, didn't I? It won't steer."

Vander turned and walked back slowly between the rows of cars. The man followed, half a step behind and keeping a little to one side.

Outside the wind howled around the corner of the garage. Vander heard it and shivered.

"Hell of a night to go out on the road," he flung back over his shoulder. Then, as an afterthought, "Anybody in the car?"

"No. What difference does it make?"

"None. Not a damned bit."

He stopped in front of a bench and poked aimlessly among his tools.

"It might help some if I knew what tools to take along," he suggested. He reached under the bench and pulled out a steel box. "What happened, anyway? Hit something?"

"Yeah, since you got to know all about it. I did."

"Another car?"

"No. A tree. Struck a soft shoulder and slid off in the mud. Didn't hurt the car much, but the damned thing won't steer. Must have busted something, I dunno. That's for you to find out."

Vander straightened up. He thought it over for a while, a faint, sardonic smile playing around his lips. He whistled softly as he sorted his tools and

tossed them in to the box. Finally he said easily—

"You're a hell of a poor liar."

The big man snapped up with a jerk. He closed in swiftly.

"Listen, greaseball, if you're looking for trouble . . ."

Vander leaned back against the bench. He put up an oily hand and shoved it none too gently against the big man's chest.

"Wait a minute," he said evenly. "I ain't asking for trouble, but I ain't dodging it. I asked you what happened to your car because I had a good reason for wanting to know. But I didn't ask you why it happened. I don't give a damn why. Maybe you was drunk. Maybe you was fighting with somebody. Maybe a lot of queer things happened. But don't try to tell me you hit mud and slid off."

He paused. A cold wind rattled the windows. A steam pipe rumbled heavily against the wall.

"In this weather," he explained, "there ain't no such thing as mud."

HE SNAPPED down the cover of his tool box and swung the load up to his shoulder. Balancing it there, he ambled across the floor to the wrecker. He shoved the box in on the floor and climbed in behind the wheel.

The wrecker was an ancient twin, a veritable automotive antique. It steered like a steamroller and rode like a battleship. The top was gone and only the frame of the windshield remained. The single seat rode high in the wind—like a perch.

The man with the black eyes stared at it, puzzled.

"What's that for?" he queried. "I got the car back on the road myself. We don't need that."

"The hell we don't," Vander argued. "Maybe you'd like to walk."

"Walk? Say, is that all you got to ride in?

"That's enough, ain't it? What do you expect to ride in, the Graf Zeppelin?

The big man sprang upon the running-board, his face crimson with anger. Vander braced himself and let his right hand fall away from the wheel.

"Listen, wise guy, I've had enough of that chin music from you. Climb outa' this circus wagon and trot out a decent car."

"There ain't no other car."

"Ain't no . . . ? Say, look at 'em lined up here. What's the matter with them?"

"Plenty," said Vander flatly. "They belong to the customers. And get this straight. We don't use the customers cars for trade. Never. Not even for tough guys. Get the idea?"

The big man said, "Oh for God's sake." He threw himself into the seat beside Vander. "Ain't you got a car of your own?"

Vander reflected. "Yes, I got one. I s'pose we could use it, if there's no trucking to be done. You're sure you got that car back onto the road again?"

"I said so, once, didn't I?"

"Yeah, you said so, all right. But it appears sometimes that there's a hell of a difference between what you say and the truth."

VANDER'S little sedan took them out into the country on a narrow, hard-surfaced road. It twisted between high hills, skirted the edge of a meadow and plunged into deep woods. The overhanging trees shut out even the faint light of the stars.

Vander drove easily, peering steadily ahead in the path of his headlights. Finally he said—"How far out?"

"About two miles. We're most there."

"Uh-huh. Darker'n hell, ain't it?"

"What d'you expect? Sunlight?"

"I could use some. There's pleasanter things in life than working under a car

on a cold road with nothing to see by but a flashlight. Lucky you're alone. It ain't exactly a pleasant night to be sitting out here in a car while you're out trying to—Say," he broke in suddenly, "what kind of a car you got, anyway?"

"It's a—aw, hell, I dunno what it is."

"Oh, it ain't yours?"

"Listen, monkey, what the hell do you care whose it is?"

"I don't. Not a damned bit. I don't care if it belongs to you or the Crown Prince of Bohemia. Get the idea? And I don't care if you borrowed it from your mother-in-law. Or stole it off the curb."

The big man leaned suddenly toward him, his voice sharp, menacing.

"Make that last crack again," he threatened.

"Push over," said Vander. "You're crowding the wheel. Anyway, here's your car."

It stood beside the road, wrapped in darkness. The lights from Vander's car flashed against the back window and showed the curtain drawn.

Vander swung out into the middle of the road and rolled on past. He turned around and drew up facing the other car, flooding its front assembly with light.

The man with the black eyes reached for the switch.

"Duck those lights," he snapped. He found the switch and clicked it off. Darkness came in so black that Vander could scarcely outline the car.

"Hey, what the hell do you think I am?" he demanded. "A cat? I can't see in the dark."

He snapped on the switch. The big man fairly leaped on him turning it off.

"Leave those lights off," he snarled. "You got a flashlight."

"Yeah, sure. I suppose I hold it with one hand and work with the other. What do I do when I need both hands?"

"I'll hold the light, that's what."

"Okay. Suit yourself."

He got out of the car and pulled his tool box out into the road. He took out his flash and played it over the front end of the car. Not a dent nor a scratch.

"I guess that tree you hit ain't suffering much," he observed dryly.

"Never mind the chatter. Get to work."

"Sure. D'you mind telling the truth for just once? Is there something wrong with this car or ain't there?"

"You heard me. I told you it wouldn't steer."

"Maybe."

He went around behind the front wheel and crawled under the car. A steel rod clanked noisily against the hard road. Presently he crawled out.

"Reckon you told the truth that time. It won't steer. Not for some time."

"You can fix it." It was half question, half threat.

"Guess so."

He poked around in his tools and picked out a hammer and a punch. He pointed the light under the front axle and focused the spot.

"Hold that right there for a minute."

He crawled back under the car and hammered noisily. The wind swept the sound away into the night. Presently he came out holding two pieces of a steel pin.

"Sheared off," he said shortly.

"Got another one?"

"No. Maybe I can make one that'll last till you get to a garage." He fitted the two pieces together and put on a pair of micrometers.

"Hell," he said disgustedly, "it's tapered."

He took a small box of assorted iron bolts and poked around until he found one that suited him. After measuring it with the mikes he took a broad file and began to work in the taper.

It was slow going. He needed a vise to hold the bolt. His hands were cold and numb. The bolt slipped out of his fingers and rolled under the car. He took the flashlight and crawled in after it.

The big man was impatient. He said—

"Do you have to do that?"

"Do what?"

"File that damned thing so much."

"Well, I ain't doing it for fun, that's certain."

He stopped suddenly and listened.

"What are you doing now?"

"Hey. Wait a minute." He stood motionless, listening. Something stirred inside the ear.

He relaxed and let his hands drop to his sides. He tried to look at the big man but darkness hid his face.

"So there's nobody in the car, huh? Say," he demanded angrily, "what is this? What are you trying to pull off anyway?"

The big man took a swift step forward. One hand seized Vander by the arm. The grip was torturing. The powerful fingers bit like fangs into the flesh. A gun jammed into Vander's belly, its muzzle round and hard.

"Listen, greaseball, not a peep outa you, or I'll blast your guts all over this road. Shut your mouth and get to work."

Vander's belly crawled away from the gun. His heart began to pound. His breath came short. His knees shook a little. He wasn't yellow, but he knew when he was licked. A fight was no novelty, but a gun jammed against his belly was another thing again.

It was easy to read about. Nothing very exciting to see in the movies. But with the cold steel ring pressing painfully against him, with death grinning at him out of the darkness, it wasn't so easy to keep cool and steady.

"Okay," he said a bit shakily, "you can take that cannon out of my belly. And pick your fingers out of my arm. I'm just working. I ain't hearing nor seeing nothing."

The grip on his arm relaxed. The big man backed away, growling a threat as he moved. Vander put his hands under the beam of the flashlight and went back to work. He could see nothing but the motion of his hands as he filed and measured, but out in the darkness beside him he sensed the presence of the gun.

For the last time he took micrometer readings.

He handed the flashlight to the big man, butt first. He didn't want to see the gun. He knew only too well that it was there.

He went around and crawled under the car. The light struck full in his eyes.

"Higher," he said dully.

The light moved up. Above him something thumped on the floorboards. The sound came down through clearly. There was another sound, too, halting, broken, yet always continuing.

Vander knew when he heard a woman sobbing.

His hand shook a little as he groped to fit the pin in place. His voice wasn't quite steady when he said, "A little to the left."

The light moved slightly to one side. Above him the sobbing continued. He said—

"Hold it."

He fitted the pin in place and tapped it with a heavy hammer. It yielded a little with each tap, wedging slowly into the hole.

Above him the sobbing had stopped. A woman's voice was pleading, begging. It said—

"Please, oh, please don't." It rose swiftly, a note of terror creeping in, until it was almost a scream. "Don't . . . oh, God have mercy . . ."

It died away in a choking gurgle.

Vander struck savagely at the bolt. The heavy hammer glanced, slipped off, and grazed his thumb.

He howled with the pain of it, rolled out from under the car still clutching the hammer, and jumped to his feet. He jammed the thumb into his mouth, sucked at it, and swore.

"Why don't you look what you're doing?" the big man growled.

"All right, all right," snapped Vander. "If you'd hold the light so I could see, maybe I could pound something beside my fingers."

He seized the light, knelt down, and thrust it under the front axle. "There. Hold it there like I told you."

The big man knelt down and took the light in one hand. Vander knew what the other held. He tightened his grip on the hammer. He straightened up and looked around. The darkness was like thick mud.

He drew a deep breath and teased his muscles. His hand swung in a short arc. The hammer shot down and struck the big man behind the ear.

He toppled over sideways and lay still. The flashlight clattered down and shot a long V of light across the pavement. The gun was a dark splotch in the middle of the V, with long shadows trailing out behind.

Vander picked them both up. He listened. No sound inside the car. He said—

"Hold it right there and don't drop it again."

He snapped out the light and went around behind the front wheel. He got down as if to crawl under. Still crouching, he crept back until he was abreast of the car door. He laid his hammer on the running-board. One hand held the light; the other gripped the gun.

He sprang up swiftly and jerked open the door. A beam of yellow light shot into the car.

"Don't move," he rapped out. "Don't move a muscle."

The light revealed a girl huddled in the farther corner. Her face was pale and colorless. She stared with steady, unblinking eyes, straight into the light.

The man had been sitting facing her. As the door opened he whirled around and stopped on the edge of the seat. At the sound of Vander's voice his hands went slowly up, one wavering a little to shield his eyes from the light.

"Get out," said Vander, "and come out with your hands in the air."

The man in the car moved without protest. He came forward, stooping to clear the low roof, his hands on a level with his ears.

Vander swung the door wider with his elbow and moved aside to let him pass. He stepped down onto the running-board, hesitated for a moment, and lunged sidewise.

His shoulders smashed into Vander's belly. The impact swept him off his feet. Long arms coiled around his waist, pinning his gun arm helpless against his side. He went down on his back with a crash that dazed him. The gun slipped out of his hand.

He struck out savagely with the flashlight. His knuckles banged cruelly against the car. The light flew out of his hand and rolled under the car.

The long arms tightened around his waist like steel cables. With one arm he fought to tear himself loose. The breath was being crushed out of him. His ribs caved, and blood pounded with agonizing pressure in his head.

His free hand clawed blindly in the darkness. It flailed around helplessly, struck against the running-board, and his groping fingers closed around the handle of his hammer. He grasped it short, as a ball player chokes his bat, and chopped down swiftly with a quick twist of the wrist.

The long arms relaxed, tightened convulsively, and loosened again. He struck a second time, missed, and took the blow on his chest. The man's body slumped lifelessly across him, bearing him down with its weight. He squirmed out from under it and stood up.

His breath came fast; his head reeled; his body ached with a dozen bruises. One elbow burned where the skin was scraped off.

He found his flashlight still burning

under the car. He crawled in after it, brought it out, and flashed it inside the car. He said a little breathlessly—

"You'd better come out now, Miss."

She said in a tone of relief—

"Oh, it's you. I was so afraid that . . ."

"Sure," Vander cut in. "But I'm lucky."

She came out unsteadily, missed the step down and pitched forward. Vander's arm shot out and caught her.

"Steady," he said evenly. "You're a little rocky."

She leaned heavily on his arm. "I'm all right."

They went over to Vander's car. She walked uncertainly, leaning heavily against him. He opened the door and held the light for her. She stepped up, swayed, missed the running-board and crumpled in the road.

"My God," said Vander, "they been rough on you."

He lifted her bodily and set her in the car.

He gathered up his tools and tossed them into the box. A moment later the little sedan slipped away from the spot and raced back over the narrow road.

For a while they traveled in silence. Finally Vander explained, "I'm taking you back to the garage, where you can get in touch with friends."

She said simply, "Yes. Thanks."

IT WAS cold in the garage. Vander dropped a cautious hand over a steampipe. He let it lie there for a moment, then shook his head dubiously.

"Guess I've lost my fire," he said regretfully. "You wait here while I take a look."

He went off at a dog-trot, down to the boiler-pit at the back of the garage. It was warmer down there. He began to feel hopeful about the fire. A small patch of glowing coals made a red splotch in the center of the fire box.

He seized a slice-bar and heaved up the fire. It came out hot in that one small patch. The rest was dead. He collected the live coals and buried them under fresh fuel. He opened the drafts and turned away.

"Either it will or it won't," he told himself.

He found the girl standing where he had left her. He was sure that she hadn't moved an inch away from the spot. Something held her rooted there. Fear, shyness, fatigue—he couldn't guess.

"You'd better move around a little," he suggested. "You'll keep warm that way until the fire comes up."

She said unconvincingly, "I'm not cold."

"You're shivering."

"Yes. But I'm not cold."

"You don't need to be scared. You're safe enough in here."

"For a while, perhaps."

He pondered a moment. "You got friends around here, I s'pose."

"Yes. If I could use the phone . . .

"Sure." With a piece of clean waste he wiped off the service phone and handed it to her. She pushed her beret up on one side and pressed the receiver against her ear.

They waited.

Presently she said nervously

"They don't answer. I think the line's dead."

Her hand shook. Her voice was unsteady.

Vander looked at her, puzzled. She had funny eyes.

"You forgot to dial your number," he reminded her.

"Oh. It's a dial phone." She was confused, embarrassed. Her hands made little futile, purposeless motions. "I've never used a dial phone," she confessed finally. "Would you get my number for me, please?"

Vander stared at her. At her eyes.

"Sure. What number?"

"Westwood 5100."

He called an exchange, got his connection and dialed it off, repeating each figure aloud.

They waited a long time. Finally a sleepy voice came over the wire.

He gave her the phone. She asked eagerly: "Mr. Odell?"

"Yes."

"This is Lorry."

Vander moved away. She had her party. The rest of the conversation was nothing to him. He could hear her talking excitedly, answering questions in quick, eager monosyllables. The words came indistinctly but her tone was unmistakeably bright, eager, hopeful.

She paused once and called to him. "Where am I?"

"Halfway Garage. Meridan Pike." He flung the words back over his shoulder.

She hesitated, uncertain, as if she had not quite understood. Then she turned back to the phone.

Vander watched her from a distance. Her voice was low, pleasant. She was pretty, too, in a quiet, wholesome way. Youthfully attractive, all but her eyes. They puzzled Vander. They were red-rimmed and sore-looking. The eyeballs lacked natural lustre. They were dry, bloodshot, swollen. They seemed to look at an object without focusing.

She finished speaking and hung up. Vander watched her closely, his mind racing. Finally he said—

"Put the phone on that little shelf in front of you."

She reached out until the instrument was almost at arms length.

"Wait." His voice crackled in the silence. He stepped over and took the phone from her hands. Startled by the edge in his voice she shrank back.

"Sorry. I didn't mean to scare you. I thought you were going to drop the phone."

She said, "I'm sorry . . ."

"Sure, I understand."

"No. I'm afraid you don't."

"I reckon I do," he said slowly. "You see, there ain't any shelf in front of you. There's just—space. The fact is, Miss, you're—blind."

She cracked under that, went to pieces like a shattered goblet. Restraint was swept away in a flood of tears. She crumpled on the floor, a sobbing, quivering heap, every nerve in her body raw.

He carried her swiftly across the floor, sat her on a wooden bench, and propped her up against a row of mechanics lockers. She struggled against him, heaving and threshing in a wild, hysterical frenzy. Her cries echoed down from the high roof. Her feet beat a frantic tattoo against the cement floor, and her small fists dug savagely into her red-rimmed eyes.

Suddenly Vander understood. He knelt swiftly and yanked down her burrowing fists.

"How long you been blind?"

Startled by his tone, she stopped crying for a moment.

"Not long."

"How long?"

"Since last night."

"Those muckers in the car—they did it, huh?"

She choked, nodded.

"How?"

"I don't know. They spread something on my eyes. It burned—and itched."

She snatched her hands out of his grasp and began her frantic rubbing. Little moans, broken off hurriedly, escaped her lips.

He got up quickly, went to his locker, his face grim. From his own experience with burns he knew the agony she endured. And the awful strain she bore before she finally broke.

With swift fingers he unraveled the combination lock and opened the door. From a small emergency kit he snatched a tiny bottle, scarcely larger than his thumb. It was half full of a pungent, yellow oil which had cost him four dollars an ounce one day when he had care-

lessly put his hand in front of an acetylene welding torch.

Armed with this and a wad of absorbent cotton, he hurried back. Her sobbing had diminished. She was getting a grip on herself.

He seized her none too gently and stretched her out on the bench. With clumsy, grimy hands that left dark thumb-prints on the white cotton, he dabbed oil on the burned skin and squeezed a few drops in against the hot, glazed eyeballs.

Relief was swift and apparent. The deep lines of pain disappeared from her face. She relaxed. Vander watched her and kept on working. As he worked, he talked.

He said savagely, "The dirty, rotten . . ." he checked himself. "How'd they come to do that?"

"Torture," she said bitterly. "Pressure. They thought they could make me talk. They thought that the awful pain and the realization that I was gradually going blind would make me tell them things, things about the office."

"You work in an office?"

She said, with a trace of dignity, "I'm private secretary for Mr. Odell."

"Oh."

"Do you know him?"

Vander thought a moment. "He's the district attorney, ain't he?"

"Yes."

"So you work for him. How'd those dirty gorillas come to get their hands on you?"

"They were watching for me when I came home from work last night."

"What for?"

She balked at that. Her face was a mask of indecision.

Vander said hastily, "I reckon that's none of my business."

Her face cleared. "If I answer your question I'll be telling facts that they couldn't force out of me. But—I'm going to tell you."

"Reckon you'd better not. Your boss wouldn't be much pleased."

She ignored that.

"Those men," she began in a tense voice, "are murderers, paid killers. At least they were, until the police picked up the man who paid them. They took him in on a minor charge, only an excuse. They worked on him eighteen hours before he wilted. But now his confession, typed and signed, is in Mr. Owell's office safe. And it will send Rader and Sax to the chair."

"Them two guys killers?"

"Yes. Rader is the big man who came back to get you."

"Uh-huh. So he and his pal figured on getting the confession from you?"

"No, not that. They don't know about the confession. They don't know what's happened. That's the trouble. They don't dare move for fear they'll jump into a hotter spot than they're in now."

Vander squinted one eye and looked thoughtful.

"I reckon they know what's happened, all right. Trouble is, they ain't sure that they know it. Ain't that it?"

"Yes. I think so. They were awfully certain that I knew all about it, for some reason. But I said I didn't know. Today I rested some. Early this evening I got away. But they caught me. I —you see, you can't run very far when you're . . ."

She began to cry.

"Cut that," said Vander gruffly. "It'll hurt your eyes."

A loud metallic snap echoed through the garage, the first steam crackling in the cold pipes. The fire was coming up.

The girl stopped and listened.

"What was that?" Her voice was a hoarse whisper.

"That's steam in the pipes," Vander explained.

It began coming in rapidly. The pipes

snapped and crackled all around them. An air valve began to hiss.

"I heard something else. Outside."

"A car?"

"Yes. I distinctly heard a motor."

"Maybe it went by."

"No. It stopped. I'm sure it did."

"I didn't hear anything."

She said in a choked voice—

"When one doesn't see, one has twice as much to hear."

Vander listened. A full moment dragged by. The pipes were slowly quieting as the steam spread evenly through them. The air valve choked, sputtered.

"I'll have to take a look at that fire or else . . ."

The clanging of the bell cut short his words. The big light flashed red. The girl sprang up, her face whitening.

"What was that?"

"The night bell. Somebody's outside."

"Who is it?"

"I don't know. Maybe it's your boss."

"No. It couldn't be. He hasn't had time. Maybe it's . . . Supposing it's . . ."

"I ain't supposing nothing. I've got to go out. You wait here."

He hesitated a moment before going out. His fingers weren't quite steady on the bolt that locked the service door. They slipped, fumbled. He seized the bolt and snapped it back angrily.

"Yellow," he muttered. "Scared as hell."

Outside he could hear a soft, steady swishing sound. It was like the gentle escaping of air. It continued steady and unbroken, unvarying in its intensity. Its smoothness was evenly punctuated by the rhythmic pounding of his heart.

He snapped on the outside light and pushed open the door. A big sedan was drawn up in front of the garage. The forward half of the machine was hidden in a huge cloud of steam which came billowing up from under the front fenders. It came with a muted hiss down through the overflow pipe.

An elderly man with gray hair and pince-nez glasses stood off a few paces glaring at the car. He shot a glance at Vander and yelled excitedly—

"Get away from that damned thing. It's going to blow up."

Vander laughed.

"I reckon it ain't that bad." He went over and put his hand against the metal honeycomb. Near the bottom it was icy cold. Frozen tight.

"I'll open the doors," he said. "Drive her in."

The man glared at him. "The hell I will," he snapped. I wouldn't touch that damned thing for a thousand dollars."

Vander opened the big doors and rolled it in. He took it away down back near the boiler pit. The old man trailed along at a cautious distance.

A steampipe ran out of the boiler pit and terminated in a hand valve. From the hand valve ran a flexible metal hose, outfitted with a long, curving nozzle, the kind used on gasoline pumps. The butt of the nozzle turned down in a pistol grip wound with asbestos. A conveniently placed trigger controlled its flow.

The old man asked, "How many hours to thaw out the damned thing?"

"You'll be on the road in ten minutes."

"Huh?" he demanded suspiciously. "I've never seen it done that quickly before."

"You'll see it this time."

He opened the hand valve. Under pressure of the steam the hose began to writhe itself out of a coil. Vander raised the hood and placed the nozzle down under the fan. He pulled gently on the trigger.

The steam hissed out. As the metal began to take on heat he forced the trigger gradually back until the live steam screamed through the metallic honeycomb. He worked the nozzle back and forth, up and down, until he was satisfied that there could be no frozen area left.

A few minutes later the car was back

on the road. Vander closed the big doors and turned off the light. Going down back he called out—

"No need to hide any more."

She came out from behind a row of lockers, feeling her way cautiously as she moved. Vander watched her groping uncertainly in her blindness. His mouth was a tight line, his face grim.

He muttered. "The dirty, damned . . ."

She raised her head and asked—

"What did you say?"

He said quickly. "I've got to shut down the fire. It's running away with us."

She turned her tortured eyes toward him. "You didn't see a car outside, did you? Or any men?"

"Not a soul."

"Mr. Odell should be here by now."

Vander picked nervously at a grimy callous. He said—

"I figured so, too. You're sure he knew where to come?"

"Of course, he knew. I told him what you said—'Halfway Garage, Sheridan Pike'."

Vander's jaw dropped. He groaned. "I said Meridan Pike! Sheridan Pike is upstate, forty miles north of here."

Her face went slowly gray.

Vander wheeled suddenly and went down the garage floor on the run. He skidded to a stop in front of the phone.

A piece of cardboard with a list of telephone numbers hung on the wall. He ran his finger down the list until it pointed to Emergency Police.

He dialed off the number swiftly and clamped the receiver against his ear. His fingers drummed nervously on the rim of the mouthpiece.

It occurred to him suddenly that the drumming was not reproduced in the receiver. He banged the hook down with his thumb. Still no sound.

At a noise behind him he spun around. The girl was coming toward him, feeling her way along the wall.

The receiver snapped back on the hook. She stopped at the sound and asked breathlessly—

"They don't answer?"

His voice shook a little. "Not on that phone. It's—dead."

It took her several moments to grasp his full meaning. She stared at him blindly, her mouth half open. Her hands slowly clenched. She began to whimper.

"None of that," Vander cut in sharply. "*We* ain't dead yet."

He took her by the arm and led her back to the bench. She dropped down limply. In his grasp, her arm trembled like a fluttering pulse.

She said, between choking breaths—

"It's all my fault. I'm such a blind fool. They'll kill us both."

Vander was quiet. He looked anxiously back toward the service door. A steampipe rumbled and growled under stress of increasing pressure.

She cried, a little hysterically—

"Why don't they come in and kill us? What are they waiting for?"

Vander said grimly—

"They'd better stay out."

She brightened.

"You've got a gun?"

"No. I couldn't hit a barn if I did."

"Then—what are we going to do?"

"You're going to sit here—there ain't nothing else to do."

"But . . ."

She never finished. Behind them the service bell clanged deafeningly. Overhead the big light flashed red.

Vander jumped nervously. "There goes the light."

"Light? What light?"

He explained hurriedly. "A red light flashes when the bell rings. Sometimes, when I'm running a motor or making a racket at the grinding wheel, I don't hear the bell."

She said tremulously, "A red light—red, danger, accidents—everything horrible."

"Cut that talk. It won't help."

He started to move away. Her ear caught the sound of his retreating footsteps. She sprang up.

"Where are you going?"

"I reckon I'd better answer that bell."

She was incredulous. "You can't. You wouldn't dare. Why—you're afraid. I can hear it—in your voice."

"I reckon a man can be scared without being yellow."

She said despairingly, "You're insane. They'll murder you."

"Not without a hell of a scrap, they won't. Anyway, it may be somebody else."

"Don't pretend. You know who it is." She turned away, her arms outflung, her fingers groping for something to guide her. Her voice was hoarse with terror. "Let me hide," she rasped, "I've got to hide."

Without waiting she rushed away. With arms outstretched before her, she went half running hard up against a row of metal lockers.

Vander shook his head and turned away.

HE WALKED down the floor between the two rows of cars, his hands working nervously in his pockets. At the door he stopped and listened. Someone was talking in a low voice outside. The voice stopped and he heard the soft trill of a woman's laugh.

He pushed open the door and stepped through. A low roadster was pulled up in front of the gas pumps. The driver was young. He wore a heavy fur coat and no hat. His blond hair was tousled by the wind.

Vander had never seen the car before, nor the man. He went over and asked—

"Gas?"

"Yes. Fill it up."

Vander unlocked the pumps and snapped the switch. Inside the pump a motor began to hum. He flashed his light into the tank and made a guess at the capacity. The indicator clicked off the gallons as they flowed in.

When the tank was full he checked the oil. To the blond young man he said—

"How about alcohol? It's a cold night."

"Not half cold enough," said the blond man cheerfully. "I'm good for twelve below."

In the darkness beside him, the woman laughed softly—

"You mean that the car is good for twelve below, don't you, Lee? You're not that warm, you know."

He said chidingly—

"Shush, child. What will the gentleman think?" He turned to Vander, smiling. "Incorrigible woman," he commented, holding out a bill.

The smile died swiftly on his lips. His head jerked suddenly forward as he stared over Vander's shoulder and peered into the darkness. Vander swung around and followed his gaze toward the service door half-hidden in the shadow.

They watched together through a long moment of silence. Slowly their heads turned back in unison, until they were facing each other. Vander's tongue moistened dry lips.

"See something?"

The young man looked at him, eyes wide, lips parted.

"Yes."

Vander was jumpy.

"Talk up," he flung out suddenly. "What did you see?"

"Well, unless I'm dreaming, I saw someone duck into that little doorway."

"Uh-huh. Only one?"

"Well—I couldn't say. I'm not sure."

Vander made change swiftly. His hands shook as he counted out the coins. He said in a toneless voice—

"You're not dreaming. I wish to hell you was."

Vander leaned forward slightly. His voice was unsteady. "Listen, brother,

I'm in one hell of a jam. And I need help quick."

The blond man shot a glance toward the service door.

"Cops?" he suggested.

"Yes, and quick, too. It ain't going to be long before it's too late."

"Climb aboard."

Vander hesitated. To go back inside the garage meant getting a hot slug ripped through his vitals. Or crashing into his skull. He wouldn't help much then. And if he went with the car, maybe they'd get back in time. Still—there was the girl in there alone with . . .

The blond young man seized him by the arm and tried to drag him onto the running-board. Vander wrenched himself free and backed off.

"Get going," he said hoarsely. "I've got to stay here." Then he added, "And listen, tell 'em to bring an ambulance. I'll be needing it."

The roadster got off with a jump. It went into high without touching second. Vander stood alone in the dim light, listening.

He heard the low-pitched drone of the motor climbing steadily higher. It stopped suddenly. Tires squealed as they slid on a curve. The motor coughed, missed, took up its song again, and droned away into the night.

Vander turned away and moved slowly back toward the garage. The light from the gas pumps projected his shadow, disproportionate and grotesquely tall, stalking blackly against the wall.

He stopped in front of the service door and raised his hand to push. The hand trembled, wavered, fell limply at his side. He walked on past the door growling to himself, "Dirty yellow coward."

He stopped, turned, and went back to the door. Once again the hand came up, hesitated, wavered—and froze.

His ears suddenly rang with the sound of a woman's scream.

He drew a deep breath and lunged forward, flinging the door wide as he shot through. A blast of warm air struck against his face. The light dazzled him.

Above the rumble of the steampipes he could hear the sounds of a struggle at the far end of the garage—grunts, little cries, the scuffing of feet on the cement.

He ran silently, swiftly, crouching low as he slipped along. He came upon them suddenly, the girl struggling, biting, clawing, fighting desperately to beat them off. As Vander watched, the big man seized her by the waist and swung her off the floor while the shorter one tried vainly to grab her flailing arms.

He stopped running and said: "Hey."

They dropped the girl and spun around, guns drawn. Vander stood motionless where he had stopped. His face was gray. His voice sounded strained when he said—

"What the hell are you guys trying to pull off here?"

The big man said—

"That's him, Sax. Let him have it."

Sax took a short step forward. Vander's hand moved in his jumper pocket. Sax stopped and said—

"Look out, Rader, he's got a gun."

Vander's hand came out of his pocket—empty. Beads of sweat traced dirty lines across the grayness of his face. His whole body seemed to wilt. He started to back off down toward the boiler-pit.

Sax closed in, his face frozen in the colorless, maniacal mask of the killer.

Vander's heel banged against something on the floor. He swayed back, struggled to catch his balance, and went down in a heap.

Instantly, Sax stood over him. His hand shot down and seized Vander by the neck. The blunt fingers dug into the flesh. Vander came up on his knees with a jerk. He closed his eyes, felt the gun muzzle against his head.

Rader suddenly yelled. He began to run. His leather soles clacked sharply against the cement.

Unnoticed, the girl had slipped away. Rader pounded after her.

At the sound of his voice, Sax half turned. The gun fell away from Vander's head. He opened his eyes. His hand went out and found the thing that had tripped him. His fingers closed around the curved nozzle at the end of the metal hose. It was hot, and vibrating slightly under pressure of the steam.

With a quick upward swing, he rammed the curving snout up under the short man's coat. His first two fingers yanked the trigger all the way back.

There was a sound like the ripping of heavy canvas as the nozzle spouted its scalding charge. The live steam bit through the clothing with a thousand tiny fangs. It tore through the skin and burned deep into the raw flesh. In an instant, live flesh was as thoroughly cooked as though it had been boiled.

The force of the steam was like the impact of a flying missile. It drove Sax backward without moving his feet, down hard onto the floor. He rolled and threshed blindly, clawing frenziedly at his steaming torso. The garage rang with hoarse, agonizing screams.

Vander released the trigger. He was lost in a cloud of white vapor. His hands smarted. He could hear Rader running toward him.

A gun barked, and a slug rang against the pipes behind him. A second shot, and chips of plaster flew out of the wall.

Vander dropped down on his belly. The cloud of steam was rising, leaving clear vision near the floor. He could see Rader from the knees down, rushing toward the steam, firing as he came.

He crouched, grasped the nozzle in both hands, and placed two fingers against the trigger. He marked the spot in the white fog and waited for Rader to appear.

He came swiftly, a huge black object rushing through the white mist. Vander pointed the nozzle at his thick shoulders, pulled the trigger back, and lunged.

Rader heard it coming and whirled. The scalding steam caught him full in the face. He flung up his arms, staggered back, and went down.

Vander pounced on him in a sudden frenzy of anger. He sprayed the nozzle viciously, savagely straight into Rader's face. He thrust the hissing, scalding steam under his chin, against his neck, up and down the front of his body.

His own hands smarted from the backwash. His lungs burned and labored for cool air. The shrill, piercing hiss of the steam tore at his eardrums.

Rader rolled, struggled, screaming like an epileptic. One huge, flailing arm struck Vander across the chest and sent him spinning out onto the floor. The hissing nozzle flew out of his hands and choked off.

He picked himself up slowly. The steam was lifting. The garage vibrated with Rader's raucous bellowing. He writhed, flung himself about, pounded his huge fists against the cement floor.

His hands clawed at his throat, tugged at his collar. The cloth ripped and peeled down across his chest. Chunks of white, boiled flesh came with it.

He rolled under a car. His arms and legs flailed deafening against the chassis. Metal rang, brake rods rattled, and the car rocked on its springs.

Vander grabbed a heavy wrench off the work bench and ran around to the other side of the car. He waited until the big man came threshing out. He swung the wrench down, a short, vicious blow.

The commotion stopped.

A NEW sound took its place, heavy soles pounding on the hard cement. The garage was full of men, running, dodging behind cars.

Vander whirled. Someone seized him

from behind and hurled him to the floor. He lay there stunned, while handcuffs clicked about his wrists. A sudden jerk brought him to his feet. He looked around dazedly.

Cops—an army of cops. Enough cops to raid a city. And he, Vander, standing alone, unarmed, handcuffed, in the midst of them. They thought he was dangerous.

It all seemed so funny. He chuckled, laughed suddenly aloud.

There was a commotion among the cops. He heard the girl cry out—

"There he is. I heard him laugh."

He stopped laughing as quickly as he had begun. He felt suddenly tired. His eyes were heavy. His head throbbed. His back ached from the impact of his fall. His burned hands pained.

He felt the darkness closing in, and reached out blindly with his manacled hands. Someone seized him, jerked him roughly up. His knees sagged. He felt himself going down . . . down . . .

The doctor was rubbing a soft salve on the backs of his burned hands. It drew out the fire and soothed, like a cool breeze against dry, blistered skin. They were alone between two rows of lockers. The handcuffs were gone.

Vander sat up and looked around. He said anxiously—

"Did you shut down the fire?"

The doctor nodded and went on rubbing in the salve.

Vander felt better sitting up. He asked, "How long have I been out?"

"About an hour."

He looked around.

"Where's the girl?"

"She's around. Want to see her?"

"No. I was just wondering about her eyes. She ain't going to be blind always?"

"No."

"Uh-huh. She'll be able to see as good as ever?"

"With certain limitations."

"Meaning what?"

"She'll be subject to eyestrain for a while. Needs a little care."

"But she'll see?"

"Yes."

He watched the doctor's thin fingers spreading on the cool salve.

"What about those mugs I burned?"

The fingers slowed.

"They're gone. Ambulance took them."

"You didn't try to fix 'em up?"

The doctor stopped rubbing in salve. His gray eyes clashed with Vander's blue ones. He asked sharply—

"What do you expect me to do with a couple of boiled stiffs?"

Vander smiled wanly.

"What the hell do I care what you do with 'em?"

The doctor said: "Humph." He lifted Vander's hands to the light and studied the backs of them.

"Any pain?"

"No."

The doctor wiped his hands on a towel and tossed it, together with the tube of salve, into his bag. He closed the bag with a snap and stood up.

"Want to see the girl now?"

"No."

"She may want to see you."

"If she does, she'll come back some other time."

The doctor's eyes were searching his face. He opened his bag suddenly and took out a whisky bottle and a small glass. He filled the glass and handed it to Vander.

"Put that in your stomach."

Vander obeyed.

The doctor filled the glass again. He raised it shoulder high and stared hard into Vander's blue eyes.

He said slowly: "Here's to a man with guts."

Vander walked over to his creeper. He sat down on it and leaned back. The whisky warmed him, left him relaxed.

For several moments he lay motionless, looking up at the girdered roof.

Down at the other end of the garage the service door closed with a soft, conclusive click.

# SWORD OF THE SEA

by PEGGY von der GOLTZ

HEAVEN blue under an azure sky, warm and bright, the sea surged in toward Montauk. The stubby thumb of the lighthouse marked the dim horizon. There a fishing boat drifted. Here a gull swooped. The menhaden school puttered along at the water's surface, crowded so close together that their sides shone dully silver from above. The sound of ten thousand little paddles carried through the still air as their tails slapped the surface gently. The gull swooped again. But the school went on. Their heads were up and their mouths open, placidly straining the minute floating life of the ocean through their sieved throats.

The blue fish school crept up, taut as crouching cats, glinting like new steel. They lunged, cutting, ripping, tearing, slashing. The menhaden floundered helplessly. A few sank to deep water and safety; but the blues were below them, striking up, killing two fish for every one they ate. The blues tore through, swallowing a bite, discarding half a fish. Sharp teeth crunched soft bodies. A thin haze of blood clouded the water. A great oil slick spread across the surface. And still the blues, glutted but insatiable, rent and slit and gashed. Blood maddened, they wallowed in the oily welter, oblivious of the dark sail that cut water to the south of them.

Xiphias swam slowly, for he was lean and hungry, and conscious that even he had need for caution. A few weeks ago his great scaleless body had been plump and firm. A few weeks from now, when he had feasted on blues and weaks and menhaden, had followed the mackerel schools up the New England coast, he

would be hard and bright again. But it would take a lot of food, for Xiphias was twelve feet long—eight feet of bone and muscle and solid flesh, and four feet of unsheathed sword with sharp serrated edges, hard, keen.

The emperor of the sea was hungry, and he was tired. He had traveled thousands of leagues, out of the Mediterranean, across the Atlantic, following the Gulf Stream where food was most plentiful, eating when he could, and going on when there was no food in sight. Several times in the last day or so he had seen oil slicks on the water, twice he had smelled menhaden; but either the slick was old, or the sharks were there before him. And Xiphias didn't want to meet a shark at the moment—not just after the breeding season. In a sheltered spot, not far from Tripoli, hundreds of thousands of Xiphias' children were learning to swim, and raiding schools of baby mullet that paddled up-wind with their mouths open. And siring half a million children is a job for any fish.

Suddenly, Xiphias stopped, every fin spread and twitching. Menhaden! No doubt of it. His big round eyes peered hard ahead. The water became opaque too soon. And in the clouded spot a commotion roiled the water. Blues? Weaks? Sharks? Who was killing menhaden? He relaxed a little, and let the vibrations beat against him. They were scattered and small and sharp. It wasn't sharks.

Xiphias dived and came up under the schools. He heaved himself half out of the water, his sword dripping and shining in the sun, and came down like the wrath of God on blues and menhaden alike. Down and up again, and down in a sweeping arc with six hundred pounds of hungry fish behind each blow.

His sword slashed like a giant's sabre. Menhaden were chopped into fragments. Blues were cut in half. Frantic heads bobbed at the surface, pectoral fins paddling madly; but no tails heaved behind them. Severed bodies drifted in their own thin blood.

The blues scattered desperately, and at last Xiphias realized that he was alone with his dinner. His dark sail twitched, relaxed. He shoved a broken blue fish with the tip of his sword, poked it again; then scooped it into his huge, toothless mouth. He swallowed hundreds of fish. Blues and menhaden blended in a glorious hash in his huge stomach. A warm contentment filled him. He could feel his sides grow fat.

He was dawdling with a piece of menhaden, wondering whether he really wanted it, when a sharp pain, fierce, swift, agonizing, shot through his side.

He whirled to meet the shark. But no shark was there. He swung again, and felt a sharp pull in the place where the pain was. He felt his flesh tear.

"Hold fast, Joe! You got him!"

A faint realization of the voice reached Xiphias, and the sputtering of the engine. He reared. Blue fish gulls were settling thick on the oily surface, snatching discarded fragments of dead fish. Then, as he fell back, he saw a hulking shape on the water. He poised a moment just below the surface. The fishing boat's hull loomed ahead of him. for all the world like a whale's belly. So that was it!

He held himself tight, every muscle drawn. His great tail heaved. His fins fell into their grooves along his body. Stream-lined, he shot forward like a torpedo. His sword plunged into the enemy, ripped through solid oak into the bowels of the small boat. He felt wood splinter. This was no whale. What was it?

He struggled with every ounce of strength he had. The boat rocked and reeled. The fishermen shouted and tried to drop a line over his thrashing tail. Xiphias jerked from side to side, flung his great body with all his might. The water foamed and spumed. But the saw-toothed edge that made his sword so

deadly a weapon against the creatures of the sea held him fast to the boat's hull.

The harpoon was nothing now; but the agony of being trapped, helpless, was unendurable. Always before he had been able to slash and parry. He was the gladiator of the sea, and here he hung like a cod with its head in a gill net. He crashed up and down, from side to side. The wood screamed. The men shouted. And suddenly the planking tore loose.

XIPHIAS wrenched around, and cracked the side of the lurching boat. He felt too wide in front. In sudden panic he realized that part of the monster's belly was spitted on his sword. Three feet of water-soaked, jagged wood was impaled on his rostrum.

The men saw the plank at the same time, and rushed for life preservers. The boat keeled and began to settle.

Xiphias felt the pain in his side again, and saw his own blood darkening the water around him. Soon the sharks would come . . . .

He dived, shoving the plank down with all his might—down, past the living green of the surface water, into the cool blue, but not safe even here. He fought the hampering plank, and the harpoon line dragged at him. He struggled deeper and deeper—down into the cold depths where it is always midnight —but not safe even here. Deeper, deeper. The cold water pumped through pounding gills. He was weak, and he knew that a trail of carrion hunters followed the drizzle of blood behind him.

At last a rock loomed dimly from the bottom, a projecting rock, overhanging at the top. Xiphias crept under the ledge, trembling, exhausted. And still the harpoon tortured him. He slipped to the other side, and the pain grew worse. In a mad frenzy he lunged ahead. The line snagged on the rock. It seemed his life was tearing out. The iron tore through his flesh, dragging it from his body. And the long barbed hook snagged out and sank.

Xiphias wavered weakly, then struggled on, to the lee of a rotting ship's hulk—a dead thing that no fish need fear. He inched into a great gaping hole that the fishing boat could have sailed clean through, indifferent to the flurry of dull-witted fishes he disturbed.

For a long time he stayed there, while the wound in his side healed, and the plank wedged on his sword grew soggy as the splintered wood absorbed more water.

But at last he knew that he must eat; and he wanted food that lived in bright sun-lit water. He wanted to feel the sun warm on his back, to feel his blood pound fast in the heat.

He slunk out of his shelter, ragged, battered, gaunt. His sword seemed too big for him, and ludicrous with the plank stuck askew on its middle.

A black creature of the depths slithered past him, dangling a phosphorescent lantern ahead of it as bait. Xiphias gulped it down. Ugh! what a hard and bony thing. What he needed was a mess of fat, juicy pelagic fishes—and the sun on his back.

He rose gradually, and, as the terrific pressure of the deep sea lessened, gradually his body adjusted itself to the change. The weight of the depths fell from him, and his youth came back as the sea warmed and slowly the world grew light, as a fish's world should be.

And finally the August sun beat down on a sparkling sea. The desolate, dun-colored tip of Long Island was plainly visible. The lighthouse still pointed the way to mariners.

Xiphias sprawled on the gently rolling water, absorbing the sun, warming his cold blood, glorying in the hot August morning.

But he couldn't stay there forever. He was hungry, hungrier than he had

ever been before. He scouted in toward the shore, every sense alert for food or danger. He was probably the gauntest sword fish in all the seas, and yet he swaggered, for he was alive, and he was warm, and he was going to fill his empty belly.

Up ahead there must be blues. A faint oily reek came back to him. Blues and menhaden. The last real meal he'd had was blues and menhaden.

Xiphias hoisted his sail and hurried; and yet he traveled slowly, for the wretched plank that clung to him tighter than any remora shoved the water ahead so it couldn't glide past his sword and rush from his tapering body as his wide-curved tail lashed on. He must struggle every foot of the way, and the plank obstructed his vision.

Still, he could see enough. And the sound waves of the sea tapped out a luscious tale of fat and tender fishes up ahead.

The puttering plash of menhaden tails reached him. And then he saw them, a small school but as closely packed as though the sea were a sardine can, ambling along toward some brackish inlet with the vague contentment of the defenseless.

Xiphias hurled himself on the school, came down crash with his sword. But he struck awkwardly on account of the plank which creaked and cracked as it struck the water with a mighty splash. He could feel the shivers all along his body. And he struck a trifle short.

The menhaden dived, and Xiphias looked ruefully at the half dozen fish left floating. But he wolfed them down. How good they were—rich and warm in his cold insides!

He swung to the west then, going past the lighthouse, in with the tide, for this way his burden seemed least troublesome. He kept well out from shore, making good progress now, past East Hampton, past Southampton's gaudy beach, past the lighthouse and the long causeway at Hampton Bays, and the flat stretch beyond where ducks quack and pollute the water. He had traveled steadily and far, but somehow food was not as plentiful as it should be. And then he saw them—a huge school of weak fish slithering along just below the surface, not breaking water as menhaden do, nor jumping as the blues do, but going quietly in a violet and silver cloud.

Xiphias darted after them, straining against the resistance of the wood. But the weaks were swift, and seemed to have a definite objective. Xiphias realized that they were headed toward the land, to a place where the sea poured in between two sandy points. For a second he paused: he had no liking for shallow water. But, after all, he was hungry. The weak fish slung into the Inlet, and Xiphias sailed after them, past the Coast Guard Station, into the Great South Bay. He was gaining on them now, for they seemed at home here and dawdled along, snapping up killies and feasting on bright young snappers.

Xiphias reared and came down at them. And again he struck short. The school dived, lunged, scattered. In a rage Xiphias plunged after them. There was a crash, a rending. It seemed to Xiphias that his head was being torn off. His sword shivered as though he had rammed another ship. As he righted himself he saw a post upright at the edge of shallow water, and, beside it, the fragments of his plank.

He turned slowly, still dazed. And then he realized that he was free. With a lunge and a plunge he came down on a school of small blues—spang in the middle. He scooped them up as fast as his jaws would open and shut.

He was rolling in the deep water of the Inlet, guzzling blues, when a steady put-put-put came to him. For an awful instant rage and fear fought in Xiphias—this was another creature like the one that had bit him and whose belly skin

was so hard to get rid of. His fins bristled. He'd like to kill it. But he dived and hustled out of the Bay as fast as his strong tail could take him.

Once out in the open sea he began to think again of food. All through the blue summer dusk and the starlit night he traveled east again, and by dawn Xiphias was on his way north. Somewhere off Block Island the mackerel would be running.

A BRISK mackerel wind clipped the waves, and Xiphias' sword pointed sharp ahead. He was hungry—not famished, for his sides were hard and bright and blue now, and his sail was gallantly erect—but he was ready for his dinner. In the distance other sails pointed, wide-scattered, solitary.

He ploughed through a slough of chopped eel grass, dived slightly to shake off the clinging particles—that meant mackerel. Xiphias' tail swished eagerly. A wrack of mutilated jelly fish drifted past—a sure sign of mackerel. And there they were, a fair school bustling along, their keen crescent tails moving rhythmically, feasting on jelly fish insides.

Xiphias crept close, sailed up, and crashed into them. A great flock of phalaropes fled screeching into the sky. But Xiphias couldn't bother with sea geese—he was after mackerel. He shoveled up his catch and went on. The school had re-formed, and was following the food trail that stretched ahead, facing into the wind with the sides of their heads out of water, and the air whistling through their gills with a sound like wind shrilling through taut ropes.

Xiphias settled down to the chase, his strong pectorals working, his tail rowing, for he knew the speed of the sharp keeled bodies of the mackerel. Then they seemed to slow, to huddle together. Xiphias gathered himself for a leap, then, half out of water, checked himself with violently braking pectorals and straining dorsal. He flopped with a smack that drove the air through his gills with a rush. But he was safe. And the mackerel school hung flopping and wriggling in the meshes of a gill net.

Xiphias snapped up a few stragglers, and turned away. He knew about those things. Once, long ago, when he was a very small fish and had not even thought of venturing out of the Mediterranean into the wide Atlantic, he had been chasing a school of baby mullet, snapping at them with absurd, oversize jaws of equal length, feeling proud of the adolescent spines that prickled all over his head, he had ignorantly followed the mullet into a web like this. Even now he could remember his terrified struggles in the net, and the horror of being hoisted into the awful dry air where gills were useless. The soft mullet were crushed and mangled, and Xiphias had been bruised. But after an eternity of strangled gasping, the fishermen had thrown him overboard—too small to eat. And today, when he could slash such nets to shreds, he still avoided them.

He dropped low in the water. It was cold at the surface, anyway, with the wind spreading the cold strata from the Labrador Current across the Gulf Stream. He nosed into the Gulf Stream and turned south.

All through the golden autumn he traveled south, basking in the warmth of the Gulf Stream, feasting on its bounty, growing bigger every day, fearless now of any danger. His eyes, large as hen's eggs, stared placidly ahead. Spread out across the water, solitary yet never quite alone, other swordfish followed the sun, and their food supply.

Xiphias wintered off the Florida coast, well out of the range of fishing boats. And at the first dawn of spring he began to think of love. It was nearly a year since he had seen his female.

He turned east, and thousands of

other swordfish turned too, starting on the long journey to the Mediterranean or the good water off the Canary Islands, going home.

Xiphias passed among them, and it seemed to him that all of them went in pairs, widely separated now, but drawing gradually nearer to each other. He lagged behind, hoping to find his wife. But the breeding time was coming. He couldn't wait.

He went a little north, then east, always watching, always hoping. And still there was no sign of her.

Finally he approached the Canary Islands, hazy and remote in the warm sea. He knew that he must find her soon, for here the swordfish fleet would scatter and search out spawning grounds along the African coast or in the Mediterranean.

Two by two the giants passed, close together now, and strangely gentle. Xiphias watched them wistfully, and it seemed to him that every swordfish in the sea had found a mate but him. He searched deep water and scanned the surface; and a feeling he had never known before took hold of him—an unbearable anxiety that was worse than any pain.

He wore himself lean tramping between the islands, searching and waiting for his mate.

And then one bright blue morning he saw a lone fish close by, paddling aimlessly. He flipped over. His big eyes bulged. It was a female all right. He sidled up to her and poked her side very gently with his sword. Her fins flickered eagerly, and she arched her side as no other fish in the world could do.

Xiphias leapt with a mighty splash. He dived and came up on her other side. He rubbed the whole great length of his body against hers. She quivered and snuggled close to him, then skittered ahead, and waited with twitching fins. What a beauty she was! There wasn't another fish in all the waters of the world like her. Xiphias circled her in fatuous delight. He sailed up in a great curving arc, dripping a rainbow behind him. He dived straight down. He raced ahead. His color deepened, glowed. She turned aside and scooped up a fish. Xiphias posed and strutted, every fin taut, his tail swishing proudly. It was so long since he'd seen her. Just after the spawning season she had dropped behind. And here she was, as plump and lovely as ever.

They swam together, hunted together, ate together. She was larger than last year; she would lay even more eggs. Xiphias no longer watched the other gladiators, and all wistfulness was gone from him. He swelled with pride and love as they hurried toward Gibraltar.

SUDDENLY a churning rumble came to them through the water. They hovered just below the surface as an ocean liner cut across their path. They stared as the armored belly of the monster loomed before them, longer than the longest whale.

The female's fins twitched with anger, but Xiphias slapped her farther back. The fishing sloop had been a puny infant compared with this gargantuan creature.

The swell flung them away like chips in the water. Xiphias rolled and tossed in the rolling sea.

He struggled back through the tumbling waves. A long white path of foam streaked the sea where the ship had been.

His wife swam up beside him, poised a moment, then dived. He saw her come up under the trail of floating garbage. He hesitated a moment, then followed—he had to know what it was too. But he went cautiously, dived deeper, came up slower—into a welter of blood.

He gawked, bewildered by the sudden turmoil. Then he saw his wife, half on her side, lashing desperately, while her blood streamed out, darkening the water.

For an instant Xiphias stared. He saw his wife swing round and slash. And then he saw the sharks—three of them—mackerel tails.

They whirled under the female, their backs dull smoky blue, their bellies light, vicious over-shot mouths open, wicked, stiletto-sharp teeth ready. The smallest one was ten feet long.

Xiphias lunged at the nearest shark, felt the heavy shagreen skin rip, felt his sword sink deep into her side and turn as she lunged ahead. She tore free, but with a five-foot jagged slash in her.

Xiphias saw his female gash into another mackerel tail. But she struck too high to do much damage. And the third one was turning under her to snatch into her belly again.

Xiphias tilted at him, but just grazed the dull, rough hide. And in that same instant he felt his skin tear. The old female he had ripped was slashing now in a frenzy, indifferent to the wound and to her dragging entrails. She tilted to strike. And Xiphias thrust his sword between her heavy pectorals. Blood gushed into his face. She struggled free and writhed round and round in mad circles, sinking as she twirled.

Xiphias looked through the gurge of blood for his wife. She was weaving from side to side, but cutting gallantly at the two berserk selachians.

Xiphias was sore and tired; but he knew it was a fight to the death. He tore into the nearest shark, throwing it through the water as his sword gouged in. He swung between the shark and his wife—he was going to finish this one. But the shark ripped loose, and, gushing blood, dying, yet raging in the last great fury, plunged at Xiphias and snatched the end of his sword in its huge triangular teeth. The dying shark clung to him, gripping his sword by its saw-toothed edges.

Xiphias writhed and struggled. The shark was sinking now. And he was sinking with it. Down, slowly down. After a while the shark would float—but by that time other sharks would have found Xiphias and their slavering mouths would have torn him to shreds.

He fought back to the surface. But the shark was heavier than he; it sank slowly, turning, dragging him down.

Suddenly Xiphias relaxed. Still the shark was heavier; there was no buoyancy left in it. The world was growing dark. In a last great effort, Xiphias lashed out with his tail, tipped his sword little by little, until at last he was below the shark. He heaved up with all his might. His teeth stripped like gears from a wheel. His sword rammed into the roof of the shark's mouth. The mouth relaxed, and Xiphias swung sidewise out of the death grip.

He soared back to the surface. His female was weaving slowly now, fending off the last shark with her sword, plainly too exhausted to attack. The shark was feinting, trying to slip past her guard.

Xiphias crept up to them, still gasping. He hung for an instant, then, taut as a steel spring, hurtled at the shark. The female lashed out, too. They jerked this way and that, tugging, straining, until at last the shark went down, a tattered, gory remnant.

SAPPHIRE blue and warm and ardent, the Mediterranean stretched in the sun. A fishing boat drifted. A gull swooped. Two dark sails cut the water. Two battered sword fish swam close together.

Xiphias darted in front of his wife. He posed and capered. He dived and came up beside her. She arched her side toward him, oblivious of the ugly scars the sharks had left. His fins flickered with delight. For a breathless instant his side touched hers. Then he smacked her with his sword, lashed with his tail. Their spawning ground was just a little way ahead.

# THE COURSE OF EMPIRE

by HENRY LA COSSITT

CORTES frowned. His brow was furrowed, his hawk's nose distended with his dark mood, his lips compressed into a thin, ruddy line above his sable beard. He stood on a small eminence looking out over the plain where the troops took their ease.

"Orteguilla," he growled to his page, "summon the captains, summon the soldiers!"

The page scurried away. Cortes flung off his helmet, stood waiting, clad in half mail, his gauntleted hands on his hips. Nearby, Fray Olmedo, his friend and priest, watched.

"Peace, son Hernan," said Olmedo. "Peace and good heart."

Well might the captain frown.

Behind him lay the Empire of the Aztec, already rising in hatred and rebellion against his power; before him stood the city of Cempoal with its hostile caciques; and more dangerous than these was Pamphilo Narvaez, the arrogant, a Biscayan, with one thousand four hundred Spanish fighting men, with twenty pieces of cannon, eighty cavalry and one hundred and sixty muskets. They had been sent thither by Diego Velasquez, Governor of Cuba, and the conniving Bishop of Burgos, who, back in Spain, had the ear of the Emperor Charles V, with orders to supersede Cortes or to destroy him.

As for Cortes, he had—excluding the garrison under Alvarado left behind in the capital, and the soldiers at Villa Rica on the coast—his entire force with

him. And his entire force on this field numbered little more than two hundred men!

He had beaten his way through jungle and desert and mountains from the coast to the City of Mexico, called by the Aztec, Tenochtitlan; he had seized and held hostage the great king, Montezuma, in his own capital; he had wealth to the extent of six hundred thousand crowns in the palace of Axayacatl in the heart of Tenochtitlan, and this he had forced from Montezuma himself. Now came this Narvaez with papers and pompous threats to overthrow him.

He had marched his little army eastward to meet this Narvaez.

He eyed his captains as they gathered around him, followed by the troops. There were Sandoval, De Oli, Avila, De Leon, Del Castillo, men of iron who had sailed from their native Spain to lands beyond the sunset in search of *El Dorado* and they had found it.

They stood before him, scowling and scarred, some in morions, some in leathern jacks, some with pikes, some with swords, a few with arquebusses, several with horses.

Cortes was silent as he eyed them; they were silent as they waited. Then he smiled, for he knew them.

"*Soldados!*" he thundered, and his voice was inspired. "We have braved death and the Aztec; we have descended into the volcano and defied the fires of hell itself to procure the sulphur to make our powder; our wounds are unhealed, our limbs stiff from leagues of weary marching and beds of hard rocks. Our sinews ache with the weight of our weapons. Yet we have won our gold and won honor. And now, *caballeros*, now comes Narvaez, our own countryman, who intrigues with the Aztec against us, who has proclaimed war against us with fire and sword and rope as against infidel Moors. And by whose authority?" His voice became scathing, his tone hot with contempt. "The Bishop of Burgos," he continued with slow acid, "who hides behind his cloth in Spain, sits, an obscene spider in a web, devouring the fruits we have plucked. And Velasquez, who is more a woman than a man, enjoys his fleshpots in Havannah too much to risk his greasy neck, but he would take from us our rightful possessions. These! And they dare say they do it at the bidding of his Majesty!

"By the nose of the Cid, sénores, I say they lie! I say that we, defenders of the faith of our Lord, Jesus Christ, and faithful subjects of his Majesty, must protect the rights of the Church and the Crown as well as our own lives and properties, which properties we have won with sword and sweat and blood." He paused. "But it may be that I err. It may be that I misjudge you. Speak your thoughts!"

They spoke. They gave voice so great that the far heights and the forests and the distances of the plain rang.

"*Christo y Santiago! El Rey y Espana! Viva Cortes!*"

They cheered him. Fray Olmedo, standing near, said:

"Blessings on thee, son Hernan. Thy tongue is as subtle as thine arm is strong. Perhaps it were theology and not war you should have followed."

"Thy blessings are sweet, *padre*. Better it were you should be Bishop of Burgos instead of the filth who is."

"Gently, my son," said Olmedo conventionally. "He is yet of the holy cloth." But he smiled. They were close, he and Cortes.

Then the captain disposed his commands. To Sandoval, he consigned seventy of the troops with orders that he attack the quarters of Narvaez in Cempoal, saying that to the first soldier who laid his hands on Narvaez, he would give the sum of three thousand crowns, to the second, two thousand, and to the third, one thousand, in order, he added with irony, to buy gloves.

To De Leon, he consigned seventy more of his troops to attack the quarters of Narvaez' second in command, Velasquez, who was related to the Governor of Cuba, and to himself, he allotted twenty men as a mobile reserve to support wherever the fighting should be hardest, but as to the commander of the third company of seventy, he was in doubt.

Hence, he hesitated. This one, he chose mentally and discarded, and that one; for though all were of metal and courage and would discharge the operation with skill, he must select with care. Since the undertaking probably would be sacrificial, and since wise heads were needed for the dangerous times ahead, he must conserve his veterans and trusted fighting men. He glanced significantly at Olmedo.

"The Extremeno they call Redcoat," said the priest softly. "Him who stands next to Bernal Diaz and who always is at quarrel with Escudero, of Cadiz. Him, perhaps?"

Cortes followed the priest's gaze. He beheld a young man, one of the youngest, indeed, in the army, who stood looking at him with keen, dark eyes. He was tall, deeply bronzed, haughty of countenance. There was defiant insolence in his eyes as he returned the captain's gaze. It startled the conqueror, roused him a little. The young man wore a morion, with a cuirass over his doublet, and high boots of chased Moorish leather. About his shoulders was a frayed velvet cape of scarlet, whence his nickname, and across his back a huge, two-handed sword swung in a scabbard of bullhide.

Around his neck hung a gorgeous chain of purest gold, curiously wrought, from which in a double link, depended an enormous *chalchihuitl,* the green gem so esteemed by the Indians.

The eyes of the captain flashed at the insolence of the young man's gaze.

"He is the same," he said, "who traveled from Tenochtitlan and found the mines?"

"The same," answered Olmedo.

"The one who says so little," muttered Cortes absently, "and who disturbs the company with his quarrels and troubles. They fear him and he stands aloof. And the quarrel with Escudero,—what is its substance?"

"The chain and the stone, son Hernan. In the division of the spoil he challenged ten men for its possession and only Escudero answered. They would have fought for it, had you not decided, but even now there is hatred between them."

"I remember, now. He is not good for us. Escudero—where is he?"

Olmedo pointed. Cortes saw another young man not far from the man in the scarlet cape, who also wore a morion and cuirass and who carried a pike. But he was not looking at Cortes. He was scowling at the scarlet cape.

Cortes looked back at the insolent eyes of the man in the cape.

"He is rash," he growled.

"A quality to be desired, son Hernan," said Olmedo suavely, "for that which you have in mind. Someone more valuable . . . "

In spite of himself, Cortes smiled.

"You have a wit, *padre,*" he said gruffly, and then, calling: "Hey, Redcoat, come hither!"

The young man swaggered before Cortes, the insolence and challenge in his scowling face strong as he faced his captain. Cortes scowled.

"You have courage, Redcoat?" he snapped.

The young man's eyes glittered.

"You doubt it?" he snarled.

But Cortes smiled disarmingly. "Nay," he said. "It is because of it that I call you to give you command."

Redcoat's face lighted for an instant with fierce pleasure, but the next he was once more quietly insolent.

"Name it!" he said bluntly.

"The first attack," said the captain,

"with the third company of seventy. It is against the guns that you must go."

The new commander smiled. "And when they are taken?" he asked.

"Turn them against the quarters of Narvaez and Velasquez, and when that is done and it is no longer necessary for artillery, leave several there to hold them and lead your men to support the assault. Thy great sword may do good work in the fighting."

For the first time, Redcoat smiled frankly.

"The sword is good," he said proudly. "It was tempered by a smith in Plasencia, the Beautiful. You know it, I think."

"I know it," said Cortes. "I am Extremeno also. In Medellin we know the Plasenciano smiths. Go with God!"

The young man wheeled, walked to where the seventy he was to lead stood waiting.

"He is brave," said Olmedo suavely.

"He is a fool," growled Cortes, remembering the insolence in Redcoat's eyes, "and dangerous."

"Perhaps it may be God's will that he will not survive," said Olmedo thoughtfully.

"God's or Narvaez'," said the captain.

REDCOAT instructed his company. There had been distributed among them lances made by the Indians of the province of Chinantans, longer than those of the Christians, and tipped with copper. For each lance there were two heads, the extra one in case the first were broken in combat.

"You will charge the guns with lances presented," he said bluntly. "Three ranks. And when we have swept them, discard the lance. Lay about with sword, or mace, or axe. And with the lance you shall thrust clean through, save they surrender."

He formed his company in three divisions and sat down to wait the order to advance. He looked neither to right nor to left, but gazed moodily to the eastward, where Cempoal lay against the plain. It was about a league distant. Between the city and the army of Cortes, flowed a river which they would have to ford.

He thought on that; he thought on many things. He was no fool, this youth. He knew well enough why Cortes and Olmedo had given him the task, yet he accepted it. But within him burned hot resentment. Some day he, too, should give orders, should deal out largess, and decide men's fates. But for the present . . . They should see.

He looked up to find a man standing beside him, Escudero, of Cadiz. His narrow face sneered, and to Redcoat came the memory that someone had said the blood of the Portuguese, despised by Extremenos, flowed in Escudero's veins.

"Hey, Redcoat," said Escudero, mocking the tone of the captain, "is Cortes thy father, then, that he gives you command?"

The man on the ground did not change expression.

"And if he is," he said, "does it gall you, who knows not his father?"

Escudero's face darkened as those nearby laughed.

"Swineherd!" he snarled. "For that I should spit thee, but it were better done later if we not see thee run like a hare from the battle, or if a Narvaez ball not find thy empty insides."

"At thy pleasure, Portuguese," smiled Redcoat.

Escudero's beard twitched with his rage.

"For the chain and the stone and to the death?" he said.

Redcoat fondled the chain Cortes had awarded him.

"For the chain and the stone and to the death, if you will, Portuguese."

He looked steadfastly towards Cempoal, where the white stone of the houses grew gray as the day fell away and

above him, the man turned and walked from him.

The sun slipped down the western sky and disappeared, and somewhere in the quick dusk that gathered over the plain, a trumpet called. Redcoat leaped lightly to his feet, shouted an order. All around the soldiers rose, as if the earth spewed them forth. Drums growled. Here, there, a horse reared, iron feet striking fire from the rocky soil.

Redcoat's seventy formed themselves, shouting encouragement to the others and they swung into lines with long, easy strides. Behind them came the companies of Sandoval and Velasquez and the twenty who were the mobile unit of Cortes and then the brass cannon and the falconets. Redcoat's seventy would lead the assault.

Cortes was on the march.

"Hey, Redcoat," called Escudero, "with thy chain and stone I shall buy a cacique's daughter."

They marched, then, quietly. Only the occasional clicking of the hoofs and the low rumble of the artillery like thunder far off, broke the night. Ahead went scouts who were fleet of foot and strong of heart, to discover how Narvaez had disposed his sentinels and vedettes.

It began to rain, the heavy, sinister rain of Mexico. Redcoat, striding at the head of his column, his great sword swinging with the rhythm of his body, thought of Plasencia, the Beautiful, of Trujillo, where his home was, and of the green hills of Extremedura in far Spain. In his mind's eye he could see the maids dance in the sun at the *fiesta*, could see the flash of dark eyes, the flirt of lace and silk, could hear the clicking of castanets and the tinkle of guitars. Almost, in his dreams, a song of Spain burst from his tight lips, but he stifled it.

Around him, alien, ferocious, giant cacti raised spectral arms against the night; and the rain, although it came from the clean sea, stank of strangeness.

His dream of home was sweet, but sweeter yet was the dream that followed it. It was a dream of conquest and command, of fame, and honor, and riches, of standing on the heights of mountains that looked at God, silhouetted against the sun of immortality.

The vision held him, caused him to shiver a little with the ecstacy of it, but suddenly he became alert.

Through the gloom ahead a figure came running. Redcoat raised his hand, whispered a command. The command ran back through the ranks; the column, and the columns behind it, halted, stood motionless in the driving rain.

"*Spiritu santo, Spiritu santo,*" called the runner softly, when he saw the troops. It was the countersign of Cortes.

Redcoat answered it. It was one of the scouts.

"The river, because of the rains, is a torrent and will be difficult to pass," he said, "but stout men may do it. There are two vedettes at the ford."

Redcoat nodded.

"Cortes marches at the rear," he said. "Apprise him and say that we shall take the vedettes and send them back to him and that we shall then press on to our task."

"Now, Redcoat," said Escudero, "is it that you fancy command so much you go without Cortes' intelligence?"

"Forward!" growled the young leader.

The army moved on, but with even less noise, and presently, in the distance, they heard the roar of the torrent. The men breathed deeply, loosened swords, gripped their lances tightly.

The roar of the river grew; was, now, just ahead, and again the leader held up his hand, whispered his command and the column halted. But the night was too thick; no light penetrated the deep gloom as they waited. But presently came the restless clap of a hoof on the ground, the clank of mail and arms.

Redcoat sprang forward, followed by the troops. As he did and at the noise of

their movements there came shouts from the darkness ahead.

*"Santa Maria, Santa Maria!"*

It was the countersign of Narvaez and when Redcoat called out the countersign of Cortes, the cry, *"Santa Maria, Santa Maria!"* came again, but then it was more of an oath.

Redcoat, his cape streaming in the wind and rain, sprang at the giant shape of a horse and rider, cleared the animal's back, grappled with the man and rolled with him to the ground.

*"Dios!"* came a shout nearby. "Cortes! Cortes! Fly and save thyself!"

The other vedette wheeled his horse, plunged toward the river. Redcoat, though locked in struggle, yet managed to shout:

"Stay him, *Bravos,* lest he give the alarm!"

Beneath him, the man cried:

"Mercy! I am strangled. I am Carrasco of Havannah."

Carrasco was a half-breed and Redcoat knew it. He rose.

"Away with him," he said.

He turned then, as those who had pursued the other vedette came running.

"He clapped the spur to his horse and swam the river. We were not swift enough to—"

"Then, gentlemen, there is no need for secrecy longer. Swiftness, now, and good heart! And thrust through with the lance! Forward!"

He plunged into the river, and they followed. It was deep, it was swift, and he struggled, breasting it, but he crossed, climbed the opposite bank, broke into a run across the plain towards Cempoal, the torches of which they could now see. Behind him came the men, preserving their ranks, and now they shouted:

*"Christo y Santiago! El Rey y Espana! Viva Cortes!"*

At the shouts, the torches of Cempoal seemed to waver, grew in number and now they could see men hurrying about in the town, could hear the tumult as the escaped vedette gave the alarm. Redcoat, running easily, threw his hands behind his head and drew forth his great sword. The ebony of its hilt sent a swift glow up his arms and into the sinews of his back and shoulders. He felt, suddenly, strong and warm, although an instant before his limbs had ached with the deadly dampness of the rain and the weariness of the march. He ran faster.

"Strike them, *caballeros!*" he shouted. "Strike for Don Carlos and Cortes!"

"Live, Redcoat! Live this night and conquer!"

It was Escudero.

"You are generous, Portuguese."

"Nay, selfish. Save thyself for me."

Redcoat laughed. They were at the outskirts of the town, now. Ahead, they could see the gunners, rushing frantically to their pieces, fumbling in panic to set the charges.

But Redcoat was swift and swiftness breeds swiftness. Cortes and Olmedo had guessed shrewdly. Redcoat and his seventy were almost on the guns, now, and the guns could do no harm unless discharged immediately. And the gunners knew it. There was not time. They drew their swords and gripped their pikes and lances and their mortified wail rose into the night.

"Courage!" shouted Redcoat. "Narvaez will tremble at that. On them!"

Over the guns they swarmed, Redcoat and his seventy, grappling with the gunners. Redcoat was first. He leaped to the back of a cannon, and as the man behind it struck at him with a pike, brought down his terrible sword. Through helm and skull and bone, the blade bit deep and the pikeman dropped, almost cleft in twain and Redcoat yelled again.

"Look, ye dogs! See what manner of men we be, the soldiers of Don Hernan!"

The men of Narvaez wavered. No *conquistadores* they. They had just come from Cuba and had no stomach for this. They had not braved the unknown or the hordes of the Aztec. Before the lance

storm, they broke and ran, squealing with their terror, as the men of Cortes pursued them, cut them down, or, disarming them, sent them to the rear as prisoners.

THE FIRST line, then, was won. Behind them, Redcoat and his men heard the charge of Sandoval and De Leon as they led their companies against the temples where Narvaez and Velasquez held their positions. These temples, called *teocallis* by the barbarians, were pyramidal and steep and easily defended, but Sandoval and De Leon did not hesitate. Their horses galloped forward, their brands cutting through the Indian troops at the base of the temples with fearful slaughter and when the horses slipped on the stone pavements, they dismounted and led the assault on foot.

The *teocallis* lay beyond the line of the artillery and now Redcoat following the orders of Cortes, sent men to support Sandoval and De Leon and, with a few, remained with the guns.

He stood atop the cannon, conspicuous in his great cape of scarlet shouting encouragement to his men. But now there came such a storm of darts and musquetry from the *teocallis* that Redcoat and his men could do nothing. Neither, it seemed, could they quit the guns, so heavy was the hail of arrows and lead.

Finally, even Redcoat could not stand there on the cannon longer. Reluctantly, he descended slowly to the shelter behind the gun. Near him stood Bernal Diaz, the veteran, who watched him.

"Escudero," snapped Redcoat, "he is dead?"

"Nay," said Bernal, "he is gone to join Sandoval."

Redcoat bit his lips.

"And what do we here?" he growled. "There is action ahead and mayhap gold in the town. I say there is no use in these guns. Let us, then, join the assault. Forward!"

They leaped across the guns and ran, despite the thick discharge of musquetry and arrows, toward the *teocallis*, where the action was heaviest. Both the men of Sandoval and those of De Leon were upon the steps of the pyramids, now, joined with Narvaez' troops in hard struggle. Below, Cortes with several cavalry and his twenty foot, charged and counter-charged among the Indians, slaying them by scores. And when the cavalry of Narvaez attempted against him, their inexperience overthrew them. Cortes, with his small band, simply avoided their heavy onslaught, more like that of a tournament than the battle, and they slipped on the pavements, or stumbled, and their horses were impaled upon the copper lances.

Now Redcoat, having come up in advance of his troop, and seeing companies of Indians running from the town to strike the flanks of the bodies assaulting the *teocallis*, hurled himself towards them, thinking he was supported by Bernal Diaz and the others. But they, being not as swift of foot as their leader, were not in time, and he found himself surrounded by the Indians.

He was forced away from the main action, then, his terrible sword swinging round and round his head, and although the Indians fell about him in heaps, their lances sought his body and some there were that pierced. He felt his strength wavering.

"This," he thought with grim humor, "must not be." And more than this, across his vision swam his glittering dream of command and conquest.

Desperation, perhaps, lent him strength. He turned, ignoring for the moment those who rushed at his back, and lunged at those who sought to intercept him. His great sword cut a path clean and through the breach he ran, plunging into the darkness of the town.

He outdistanced most of his pursuers.

Only a few hung on doggedly. But his strength was waning from his wounds. Looking back, he beheld them closing in and, at bay, stood before a house.

As they came upon him with insane courage, he slew them deliberately, with great sweeps of his sword; then, seeing that the others would reach him presently, he turned, and, leaping the little canal before a house, rushed across the further court and to the door.

The house was square and of white stone, evidently the residence of a personage of importance—perhaps that of a cacique. Redcoat pushed open the mahogany door and stood behind it, as the pursuit passed by.

He breathed deeply, then, sucking the air into his tortured lungs, and would have left the house to rejoin his comrades in the fight, but something, something that he felt only vaguely, gave him pause.

He turned quickly, but the house was dark. Cautiously, then, he moved through the rooms and though the feeling that something was near and at his back persisted, he heard nothing, encountered nothing. He reached the far end of the house, turned to retrace his steps, when he halted, body trembling with his tension. For assailing his nostrils was a peculiarly sweet odor, as of rich wood burning, and far to the front of the house, he saw a flicker of light. He hurried, but still cautious, to the room where the light was.

But at the threshold, he stopped, wonder-struck.

The room was that of a rich man. That he understood. Here and there stood screens, overlaid with gold, and painted to depict the gods and life of this noble. The walls were likewise painted and there were several figures, some of obsidian, some of limestone, of the mythical monsters and deities of the Mexicans. The light came from odorous torches of wood thrust into niches, carved in the stone walls.

And standing in the middle of the room, where she had just risen from a chair of mahogany, stood a woman, beside whom crouched an ancient crone.

She was not Aztec; not, indeed, of any tribe in Mexico that he had seen. She was of different mien and costume. In this land that was strange and exotic, she managed to be alien, stranger still.

A long robe of what appeared to be white linen hung from her shoulders to her feet, which were shod, he saw, with leathern sandals leafed with gold and studded with gems. About her waist a thin cord of gold was fastened and upon her head was a bonnet of feathers from birds of strange plumage. But upon her breast lay a disk of gold.

It was this that most startled him. For worked on the gold was a vast, round face, with rays emanating from it, and he knew nothing like it among the Aztecs.

Her face was oval, with mongoloid cast, her eyes large and beautiful and blue as his native Mediterranean so far away. Her hair was fair, her lips were full and red, and her nose was proud and exquisitely shaped. In her face was such appeal that his heart was wrung.

Instinctively, his heart pounding in his temples, he raised his hand to cross himself, stayed it. Finally, he murmured: "*Madre de Dios!* What beauty! *Madre de Dios!*"

But he spoke in Castilian. Beside her, the crone, her eyes filled with hatred, croaked viciously in a strange tongue, but the woman—girl she really was—silenced her. The girl, her eyes wide with wonder and fear despite her calmness, said, in oddly accented Aztec:

"Is it that thy sword, so smoking, is for my breast, or thy violence for my body?"

From afar off came the cries and clamor of the battle.

"Neither, princess," he said, his language awkward, but his tone vibrant with wonder, "for if you be human, you

must be royal. Neither. Who are you?"

She looked at him thoughtfully for a moment and a wistful smile fluttered across her face.

"I am a stranger to this land, *teule*, as you are a stranger."

"And where is your land?"

She raised her eyes to the beams of the ceiling, closed them.

"To the south, beyond the great southern sea, where the mountains look at the Sun, who is the Supreme God, and where the cities are of the Sun."

Redcoat's eyes kindled at her words, although he crossed himself because of her innocent blasphemy. The girl spoke in a strange tongue to the crone, who rose and hobbled from the apartment.

"Come near me," she said.

He walked to where she had seated herself in the chair, slipped down beside her, looked up into her face, He relaxed against her chair, his wounds forgotten.

"How came you here?" he said.

"By the sea, I came." She spoke in a small solemn voice. "From our land of the Sun I set sail for two days' journey even further south with my father, a priest of the Sun, and with us we had many serving men and women and treasure for a temple, but the winds were enemies and blew us from the land and then we were driven against a strange coast. The ship was broken and we came ashore and warriors set upon us and slew the men and the priest, my father, and took the treasure and brought the women and me before the great king, Montezuma, who gave me to the cacique whose house this is as a gift of alliance." She paused. "But for my people and the land of the Sun, I grieve."

Below, Redcoat watched her, a mist behind his eyes.

"TELL ME more," he said. "More of thy land of the Sun."

She spoke on in her small, solemn voice. But her voice was eager, now, her eyes alight with the vision of her eloquence.

She told him of great valleys that looked down upon the clouds, but which still looked up to heights beyond the imagination of man. She told him of cities, of jewels and gold, of myriads of people, all under the sway of a king who was a god and who was greater, even, than Montezuma himself.

And the Spaniard listened, bewitched, until he realized that her voice had ceased. He looked up, then, to find her eyes upon him.

"That is my land, *teule*," she said.

"A land of heights that looked at God . . . A land of the Sun . . . A land of gold and glory . . . He leapt to his feet.

"I shall take thee there!" he cried. "I shall take thee to thy land of the Sun!"

From his shoulders he lifted the chain of gold and its pendant *chalchihuitl* and placed it about her neck.

"With this, I pledge it!" And when she stared in wonder; "And with this!"

He bent, lifted her from the chair and kissed her full upon the lips. She caught her breath, looked at him a moment longer, and said in her soft voice:

"Thy lips are sweet, *teule*, and strange, for in our land of the Sun, it is unknown to touch lips. It is a pledge, then?"

"By my honor and," he added gently, "it is love."

She smiled. "Oh, *teule*, I shall see again my land of the Sun and you shall be by my side and shall have a kingdom, for my father was great in my land."

Redcoat's heart leaped.

"Come," he said. "I must stand before Cortes and show him I have acquitted myself of his command. And may it confound him, for he hoped I would die!"

"Nay," she said, "I fear thy *Malinche*, who gives out women as does the great Montezuma. I will remain in the house of the cacique."

"But our soldiers . . . Should they come—"

"Should they come, my *teule*, I shall tell them that I belong to you."

He hesitated, his throat tight.

"Go," she said, and then anxiously: "But you will return? For if you do not return, I shall die."

"By my life and my honor," he said, "I will return."

She smiled. "Then pledge anew, my *teule*."

He kissed her and then opened the door cautiously, looked out into the street beyond the little canal. The street was confusion, was filled with the men of Cortes as they drove the broken army of Narvaez hither and thither, pausing only to strip the Indian slain.

Redcoat leaped into the street, her kiss burning in his veins, her words singing in his heart, and came face to face, with Escudero, of Cadiz.

"Hey, Redcoat," said Escudero, "did you find gold in yonder house?"

"Nay, Portuguese. The house is stripped and blackened with fire."

"And where is thy chain and stone, Redcoat?"

He started, but simulated indifference.

"I have it not. It was cut from my neck in the fighting."

Redcoat turned and ran up the street and did not see the man of Cadiz stop, look slyly after him and turn toward the house.

The Extremeno found Cortes seated in the temple, where Narvaez had made his quarters. Nearby was the miserable Narvaez himself, wailing his defeat and the agony of his eye, which had been struck out. Redcoat advanced insolently, stood before his captain.

Cortes' eyes narrowed, but he must smile, nevertheless.

"Well done, Redcoat! Well done! For thy charge and the taking of the guns, I promise five thousand crowns of the Aztec's gold and chains enough for thy relations, if you have them." He paused, looking closely at the youth. "But thy precious chain and stone, for which you would have slain men is gone!"

"It was struck off in the battle, *Malinche*."

Cortes laughed. "Go, then, and find others. There are many in Cempoal."

"Much richer," murmured Redcoat, as he turned away.

"Five thousand crowns, son Hernan?" said Olmedo, when Redcoat was out of hearing. "It is a fortune."

"True, priest, but even a fortune is cheap as a promise." He smiled slyly.

But Redcoat did not think of the five thousand crowns. He hurried through the desolate streets, until once more he stood before the house. But at the door he stopped, trembling.

The door stood ajar, sagging on its copper hinges. Within, he saw the odorous torches burned low. For a moment he stood transfixed, then rushed within.

But in the room where she had sat he halted again, a cry on his lips.

He saw the crone, first. She lay in her blood, her ancient face twisted in agony and hate, a futile dagger of *itzli*, the hard glass, in her hand. But beyond, the crone, he saw the white robe.

Her face was calm in death, although the hair lay about her dishevelled. Her deep eyes stared at the ceiling, as if they could see, now that life had been released, the golden cities of the Sun.

He dropped to his knees beside her, lifted her, closed her sightless eyes and kissed the lids. Within him his vitals ached, but he made no sound.

The white robe, which was rent and stained, he drew closely about her, and for a long time he knelt there, holding her closely in his silent grief. For the moment it did not matter that the chain and the disk of the golden Sun had been torn from her and were gone.

How long he knelt, he never knew, but then he lifted her and carried her from the house and beyond the city of Cempoal to the forest, where in the stillness of the trees, he scooped for her a grave.

And when he had covered her and placed a cross of branches bound with a leathern thong at her head, he knelt and drew his great sword and kissed the cross-hilt and said an *ave* for her spirit.

He knelt there a long, long time, then rose and said:

"*Adios, querida*, my heart. *Adios*."

Slowly he walked from the forest.

"Escudero," he said to those in Cempoal, "where is he?"

They looked at him queerly, for there was a light in his eyes they did not understand, but they said:

"He has gone to the north with Tlascalans to look for mines."

So Redcoat went to the north. For several days he traveled, until he came upon Escudero in a range of low mountains that tumbled clear to the sea. The man of Cadiz saw him and rose, waiting, his pike ready.

"Dog!" he snarled. "Are you so eager for death that you walk so far?"

He raised the pike, but the great sword, its cross-hilt sweet in Redcoat's hands, swung swiftly.

"For thee, Lady of the Sun," he breathed.

The pike dropped from Escudero's hands as his head tumbled to the earth and almost before the body fell, Redcoat had snatched the chain with its pendant stone. He then took the disk of the golden Sun. . .

REDCOAT walked into the palace of Axayacatl in Tenochtitlan and stood again before Cortes. His scarlet cape was frayed and torn, his face gray with fatigue and a nameless grief, but the insolence, the challenge, were still there. Before the captain, he cast the chain with its pendant gem. But on his breast was the disk of the golden Sun.

"Take the chain!" he said gruffly. I am quitting thee."

But Cortes said:

"That breastplate, that disk with the face upon it—it is strange. You are fortunate." And when there was no answer, he scowled and said: "Well, and why are you quitting me, Extremeno?"

"I have slain Escudero."

Cortes' eyes hardened. "Because of the chain?"

"Nay, for private reasons."

"And for that you would quit me? I could forgive that, perhaps."

"Forgive or not, I care not. I go to conquer new lands."

So they talked. And when he had finished, Cortes said:

"Go, then, if you must, and go with God."

Redcoat turned, without salutation or farewell, and walked from the place. Cortes watched him go, frowning. Olmedo, who had stood across the room during the conference, approached then.

"He quits us," growled the captain, "and it is well, the troublous dog."

"And where does he go?"

Cortes laughed, then. "Why, priest, and would you believe it? He goes, he says, to a land beyond the southern sea, where he says the mountains look at God and the valleys look down upon the clouds, and the cities are of the Sun. He says he will conquer it." Cortes looked out upon the city of Tenochtitlan, a vast city and strange and which never had been seen or dreamed of by any European until he and his company had entered it, before he said: "It is nonsense, of course. He heard it, he says, from a woman."

"He is brave," said Olmedo.

"He is a fool, well gone," muttered Cortes.

"And what is the name he says this land owns, son Hernan? And what is his name? I know him only by the name the army gives him, that of Redcoat."

"The name of the land is, he says, Peru." Cortes paused. "As for the name of the fool himself, it is Pizarro."

"Peru?" murmured Olmedo. "Pizarro? I know them not."

# MEBBYSO

by HENRY HERBERT KNIBBS

ABOUT two hundred yards above the Mebbyso mine was a spring of clear, cold mountain water. Bedrock and his partner, Young Hardesty, had rigged a pipe line from the spring to a barrel sunk into the ground near the mine tunnel. The pipe line saved time, temper and shoe leather.

Now the barrel sunk into the ground was always full. Old Bedrock called the tiny seep of overflow a sinful waste. Water was precious. But Young Hardesty, who was beginning to enlarge his vocabulary with terms gleaned from Bedrock, said the overflow was a good indicator. It told them that the spring was doing business. As for the seepage, that could be charged to profit and loss —an unavoidable item in all business ventures, although he didn't put it quite that way.

A brilliant dawn glowed on distant butte and ridge. At the foot of the golden embattlement deep shadows thinned to the flat of the desert. Bedrock was making breakfast. Young Hardesty was still in his blankets, an unusual circumstance.

"Your indicator is kind of dried up this morning," Bedrock peered into the water barrel.

Blankets surged. Young Hardesty pulled on a pair of blue jeans, ouched into a pair of tough heavy boots, ran his hand through his tangled hair, and was ready for the day's work. "Do you

reckon the old spring has gone back on us?"

"You might go look. Coffee *can* be chewed. But it tastes better boiled."

"Doggone!" Young Hardesty also peered into the water barrel, then made his way up the rugged trail.

Young Hardesty found the spring even a little higher than usual. He sat gazing into the clear depths. A little twist of sand moved on the clean bottom. Forgetting for the moment why he had come, he recalled a day when he had hastened to the spring to get water for his friend Tonto Charley, wounded and hiding in the mine tunnel below.

It was three years since he had seen Tonto. He wondered if Tonto was still in Old Mexico, still outlawed, still as full of deviltry and humor as ever. He had liked it when Tonto Charley called him partner, told him he was the best man in the outfit. But Tonto was always joking. Now Bedrock didn't joke so much.

Bedrock? Young Hardesty came to himself. His arm shoulder-deep in the cold water, he investigated. With eyes widening he drew out a wooden plug that had been rammed tight in the outlet. The plug had been whittled from a pine branch—green wood, recently cut. There was no such wood that far down the mountain. His first impulse was to hurry and report to Bedrock, as almost any fifteen-year-old boy would have done. But hard knocks and much desert travel had taught him that haste often invites disaster.

Who put the plug in that pipe, and why? That couldn't be determined in a minute. "When you are puzzled," his father used to say, "look for tracks." The tracks were there, to and from the spring. But they had not been made either by himself or Bedrock. In that isolated region folks were as scarce as nuggets. They seldom traveled afoot. Young Hardesty glanced round about speculatively. His gaze lifted to the timbered crest of the range. "Horse staked up in the meadows. Man didn't want to be seen so he came down afoot. Plugged our line. Then what did he do?"

Anger, resentment, curiosity boiled in Young Hardesty's heart. Who would deliberately plug a pipe line in that desert region? Why, that was a declaration of war!

The hillside brush and rock, and the dwarfed trees that marched on up the slope to become giants, were as familiar as day.

"'Course he wouldn't sit here and wait for me," mumbled the boy. He turned round, his gaze searching the hillside below. Something moved in the brush. Young Hardesty ducked out of sight. The something that had moved was the top of a gray Stetson. Back toward Young Hardesty, a man was crouching in the brush, evidently watching the mine flat below.

Crawling around the spring, Young Hardesty took up a position where he could see without being seen. It was not alone a case of patiently waiting to see what the man would do. There was more to it than that.

About a week ago Bedrock had packed a burro-load of especially high grade ore to the town of Bowdry. It was their first real strike. In spite of Bedrock's natural caution, the news got around. Heretofore the citizens of Bowdry had not taken the Mebbyso mine seriously. Bedrock and his young partner had been regarded as something of a joke. But the strike had stirred up considerable local interest.

Now, as Young Hardesty watched the man in the brush below, he wondered if the rich strike had anything to do with the presence of the prowler. He thought it had. Plugging a pipeline, however, was a queer way of showing interest in a mine.

Young Hardesty saw Bedrock, far

down below, pick up a bucket and walk toward the water barrel. The old man bent down, then straightened up.

"She's coming all right now," he shouted.

ABOUT to answer the summons, Young Hardesty paused. It was just possible the man in the brush had not seen him go to the spring. Young Hardesty didn't want to be seen now. He wanted to find out what the stranger was up to. But having received no answer to his hail, Bedrock began to climb the trail to the spring. It occurred to Young Hardesty that that was just what the prowler wanted. It was a shrewd guess, fortified by Young Hardesty's experience of mines and mining men, of desert travel with his father, and the ever-present possibilities of claim-jumping. Finding the water supply stopped, Bedrock would investigate. His suspicions would not be aroused until he had discovered the plug in the pipe. Then, if the man in the brush intended to use a gun, it would be too late.

Bedrock was slowly climbing the trail. Young Hardesty rose.

"Comin'?" he called out. That was the best way—just act as if he were unaware of the man in hiding. Young Hardesty's nerves were keyed tight. It wasn't an easy game, matching his wits against the possibilities of getting shot. And that the prowler meant business, Young Hardesty had not the slightest doubt. Any one who would deliberately plug a pipe line would not hesitate to shoot.

The gray Stetson disappeared. Fighting his curiosity, Young Hardesty sauntered down the trail, gazing straight ahead. He whistled a little tune, although his lips were dry and the notes sounded rather flat.

"I figure we better eat breakfast in the tunnel this mornin'," was his first word to Bedrock.

"Scared you'll get sunburned?"

"Nope."

"Rattlesnake wiggle his ears at you, or was it just a coyote?"

"Coyote. He plugged our pipe line. Here's the plug."

"Well, darn my socks!" Bedrock examined the plug. Broad, tall and straight in spite of his years, the old man stood gazing up the hillside as if he also knew there was someone up there in the brush. "Going to rain again," he commented. "But not heavy. We'll eat our breakfast in the tunnel."

After bacon, sourdough bread and black coffee, which Young Hardesty consumed hastily and Bedrock contemplatively, the boy rose. By a supreme effort he controlled himself. Why didn't Bedrock get excited and say something? Leisurely Bedrock lighted his pipe. "Kind of a joke—plugging our pipe line like that." He peered with short-sighted eyes at his young partner.

Young Hardesty uncorked his pent-up emotions. Perhaps Bedrock would also consider it a joke that his partner had discovered a man hiding in the brush above the mine. Perhaps it was a joke, squatting by the spring watching the man, who any minute might turn loose and shoot somebody. Perhaps it was a joke to have to grit your teeth and sit still while figuring what to do. And maybe Bedrock would think it was a joke that his partner had walked down the trail trying to whistle so as to make the man in the brush think he had not been discovered. All this Young Hardesty poured out in a torrent. Bedrock puffed at his pipe. "Why didn't you tell me first off?"

So vivid had it all been, Young Hardesty seemed to think that Bedrock knew all the details.

"I'm tellin' you now, ain't I?" he said testily.

Bedrock seldom had to reprimand his young partner. When it became necessary he spoke gently, but to the point.

"You did right, son. But it wouldn't have spoiled my appetite any if you had told me before we ate breakfast."

Young Hardesty's temper came to the top. He said nothing, but his actions were eloquent. He washed the breakfast dishes with a clatter and bang, wrung out the flour sack dish-cloth as if he wanted to strangle it. Then, marching to the lean-to, he picked up Bedrock's Winchester. Aware of Bedrock's gaze, Young Hardesty explained himself. "I'm goin' to fix that fella, and fix him good."

A deep twinkle showed in Bedrock's eyes. "When you get him, just hang his scalp back in the brush a piece. If you fetched it to camp it might draw flies."

His back stiff, Young Hardesty trudged up the trail. Presently he began to feel foolish. His pace slackened. Finally he turned. Marching back to the mine, he put the Winchester away.

"Back already?" Bedrock's tone was sprightly. "Now we can do something. You see, son, we're pardners. Pardners get along a whole lot better if they kind of consult each other before they make any serious move. Between you and me, this is serious. I reckon if I had gone to the spring something might have happened."

"Hell! I done all I could," blurted Young Hardesty, not knowing what else to say.

"You did fine. A grown man couldn't have done better. What say if we shake hands on it?"

Young Hardesty felt the tears start to his eyes. Bedrock was always right, doggone it! He didn't go around shaking hands much, either. When he did take your hand in his big hard fist it meant something. Had a grip like a bear trap. Made you blink.

Steady and strong, the handshake had done more than that. It had inspired Young Hardesty with renewed admiration and respect.

"If you got a proposition," he said cheerfully, "and she's a good one, put her up to me."

Bedrock chuckled. "We was both kind of mad and excited. Now we done cooled off, let's do a little circumnavigating."

"Was you mad too?"

Bedrock nodded. "But not your kind of mad."

IN HALF an hour the partners had tidied up camp, put the food and their personal belongings far back in the tunnel, and were on their way down to the desert. Footloose, the burro Misery followed them for a while, then took to grazing. Young Hardesty carried a small sack of provisions. Bedrock had the old brown Winchester on his arm.

They plodded north along the foothills. Young Hardesty had no idea as to their destination. He surmised they were not going to Bowdry. When Bedrock circumnavigated, he was unusually silent about it. Finally the question that Young Hardesty had been mulling over in his mind popped out. "Will the fella that plugged our line think he scared us off?"

"I hope so. I figured there's more than one. It ain't often a man jumps a claim single-handed."

"Are we goin' to circle around and see if we can spot their camp?"

"I was thinking of doing that."

"And give 'em hell-a-plenty when we ketch 'em?"

"That depends. Our job right now is to see that they don't give us hell-a-plenty first."

About an hour after they left camp, Bedrock swung from the foothill trail that led to Bowdry, and headed up into the hills. They traversed an unnamed canyon—an old water course littered with huge boulders. The canyon walls, sparsely covered with brush, finally gave way to sheer, perpendicular rock. The journey became a climb. They were

pretty well winded when they surmounted the last rocky barrier and found themselves in timber country of alternate light and shadow. A thin cool wind refreshed them. Bedrock sat down and lighted his pipe. Young Hardesty squatted near him, waiting nervously.

"How did you know that this here canyon wasn't a box?" he asked.

"Didn't know. I figured on the habits of canyons on this side of the range. Most of 'em break down before they reach the crest. They get tired of trying to stand straight up, I reckon."

"Think they'll be any shootin'?"

"I don't figure there will be, son. But I fetched the old Winchester along, having noticed that folks usually are a leetle more careful in their talk when there is a shooting-iron present."

"I bet they're heeled a-plenty."

Bedrock nodded. He was more worried than he cared to admit. His first concern, just now, was for Young Hardesty. As they traversed the silent, shadowy mountain crest, heading south so as to come out opposite the mine, he told his partner that if shooting actually started he should get behind a tree.

Young Hardesty grunted. "Me, I'll be in a hell of a fix—no gun or nothin'."

"We're looking for deer. That's why I'm packing a rifle."

Young Hardesty grinned. "Hope you get one."

Bedrock was not surprised when, upon reaching the mountain meadow far above the mine, he came upon two saddle horses, staked so they could graze. The rigs were old and worn; there were carbine buckets on the saddles but no carbines in sight. On a flat of rock were the ashes of a small fire, a few empty tin cans and the stubs of many brown paper cigarettes. Far below, the dump of the Mebbyso showed like an ant hill. Young Hardesty glanced about, his scalp tingling. "Looks like these fellas was outlaws."

"Haven't seen them yet. But they're like to be—especially if they keep on plugging pipe lines."

"What you goin' to do?"

Bedrock, who had been surveying the mountainside below, shifted the rifle to his other hand. "There's something moving down there. It ain't deer." He gestured.

Young Hardesty flushed. Not until then had he seen the two figures stalking through the hillside brush. They were heading toward the mine.

"They're packin' guns," he exclaimed excitedly. "One of 'em is wearin' a gray Stetson, the other fella's hat is black. Bet they're the fellas we're after."

"You sure they ain't after us?"

"It's all the same. There's goin' to be a fight, anyhow."

"Not if I can help it. What say if we just drift along down behind 'em, and mebby have a talk with 'em? You see, son, we only got what the law calls circumstantial evidence. We can't prove they plugged our pipe line. But we can see what they are up to."

Still unaware they were being followed, the two strangers were just above the spring when Bedrock called out to them. "Hello, boys. Looking for water?"

They concealed their surprise as they turned and saw Bedrock and his partner some twenty yards behind them. Tall, lean, unshaven, the man in the gray Stetson grunted something about looking for deer. His companion, shorter by many inches, sharp-faced, sallow, with black eyes, said nothing. Their jeans were tattered, their boot heels worn down. They looked like two cowhands out of work.

"We were looking for deer, too," said Bedrock. "But not on the slope. This weather they range mostly on the top."

Trailed by Young Hardesty, Bedrock followed the men to the spring. The strangers lay on their bellies and drank. Bedrock invited them down to camp to have dinner.

"Suits me," said the man in the gray Stetson, but he made no move to leave the spring.

"Keep right on down," suggested Bedrock. "You'll strike the main trail a piece further along."

Young Hardesty was all ears and eyes. Evidently Bedrock didn't intend they should get behind him. If they were not outlaws, they should have been, judging by appearances. Young Hardesty wished that he had fetched along the old Sharp's rifle. Toughs and the run of hard characters who frequent a mining community were not unfamiliar to him. But never had he seen two men who were so obviously looking for trouble.

Young Hardesty tried hard to appear casual and at ease. He was irritated by Bedrock's attitude. He hadn't said a word to the strangers about the plug in the pipe line—and he had a good chance when they were at the spring. Worse still, he had invited them to eat.

It was all right to feed anybody who happened to come along, especially if they were afoot. But these fellows hadn't just come along. They had been sneaking through the brush like horse thieves. They didn't act right. Even now as they came to the mine flat, they made no remark about the mine, as most folks would do. Instead they regarded each detail of the camp silently, with quick, furtive glances. Young Hardesty inferred that they had never been clear down to the mine flat before.

A July rain threatened. The air was unnaturally heavy and hot. The strangers sat in the shadow of the tunnel, their carbines standing against the wall. Young Hardesty made a fire and went into the tunnel to get the coffee pot and provisions. Among their effects was the Sharp's rifle. Young Hardesty loaded it, but changed his mind about marching out of the tunnel with a gun in his hand. That would look foolish. Moreover, it would tell the strangers that they were suspected. It would be better to follow Bedrock's lead and pretend he suspected nothing.

Returning to within a few yards of the tunnel opening, Young Hardesty paused. The strangers were not where he had left them. The carbines had disappeared. So had Bedrock. Out on the flat, the cooking fire showed pale against the sudden glow of the sun.

Still in his tracks, Young Hardesty listened, but heard nothing. Quietly he set the coffee pot and bucket of provisions down, and returned to their cache; picking up the Sharp's rifle, he made his way deeper into the tunnel. It was slow going in the darkness. Certain that the strangers didn't know about the shaft which led from the far end of the tunnel to the brush-covered hillside, he felt his way along. Somebody was due for a surprise when he would finally come out and round to the mouth of the tunnel from the outside.

IT WAS HIS impatience, curiosity, anger rather than fear, that made Young Hardesty tremble. He surmised that the strangers had watched for a chance to get Bedrock off his guard and then hold him up. Reaching the shaft, Young Hardesty hastened through it to the brush-covered opening. His mouth was dry, his heart thumping. Each second he expected to hear a shot.

It was hard not to hurry. But to hurry meant to make a noise. Blinking in the sunlight, he crept down along the outside line of the tunnel. Just before he rounded the end he heard voices. They came to him strangely distinct like clean-cut echoes. "We're giving you just one hour to pack your stuff and pull your freight." It was the voice of the man in the gray Stetson.

"That's mighty short notice," Young Hardesty heard Bedrock say.

"You and the kid," came the other voice.

Young Hardesty's hair felt stiff as he listened.

"The kid might not want to go," Bedrock was saying. "He discovered this mine. He sets a lot of store by it. I'd have to talk with him."

"You'll both go," said the first speaker, "or take what's coming."

It was evident the men had managed to get Bedrock's Winchester. Easy-going as he was, the old man wouldn't stand for that kind of talk if his hands were empty.

So the strangers intended to jump the claim—run him and his partner off the property. The anger that had been simmering in Young Hardesty's heart began to boil. They would run him and his partner off the claim, would they? Young as he was, he knew that any hasty action on his part might result in Bedrock's death. That the claim jumpers would shoot him down if forced to do it, he did not for a moment doubt.

If he could only see what was going on, he might do something. Bedrock and the two men were on the north side of the tunnel, completely out of sight. Young Hardesty had come down the ridge on the south side. It occurred to him that if he couldn't see them they couldn't see him. Cautiously he slipped round the shoulder of the tunnel and into the entrance. He was nearer them now, but could not hear as distinctly as before. By concentrating his whole being on trying to hear, he managed to catch a part of the conversation.

Bedrock was talking, his voice sounded far away but distinct. "No. He ain't hiding in the tunnel because he's scared. He don't scare that easy. He went in to get the grub. He don't know what's going on, or most like he'd come boiling out and run you two played-out cowpunchers off the flat. Who's hiring you to jump this claim, anyhow?"

"Any more of that talk, and you'll get yours."

Young Hardesty's heart leaped. Bedrock was telling 'em! No partner who was worth salt on his beans would run and hide when there was trouble. Carefully Young Hardesty cocked the rifle. To come out on the run and start doing business—that wasn't so hard. But to step round quiet and easy was a pretty touchy job. Any minute they might cut loose. And that would be the end of Bedrock.

Clamping his teeth, Young Hardesty stepped out of the tunnel. Bedrock stood facing the strangers his back to the north side. The man in the gray Stetson was holding a gun on him.

Young Hardesty didn't wait to see what would happen. He had caught the flicker of surprise on the faces of the claim jumpers. Jerking the heavy Sharp's to his shoulder, he whanged away. The man in the gray Stetson jumped as if he had been struck by lightning. The carbine clattered to the ground. As he lay twitching, Bedrock leaped at the other man. The stranger's carbine snarled. A bullet whizzed harmlessly skyward. The man in the black hat fought like a fury. But Bedrock finally bore him down by main strength and weight. Bedrock's great arm rose and fell. The man in the black hat lay where he had fallen. Bedrock stood up and dusted his hands. His gesture was toward the man in the gray Stetson. "Guess you fixed that one, son."

Young Hardesty's mouth was trembling. "I weren't aimin' to kill him. I just wanted to cripple him, like."

Bedrock examined the wounded man. "You crippled him, all right. There's a hole in him you could drive a team through. A Sharp's is a mighty unforgiving shooting-iron."

"Hell, I didn't aim to kill him. He's a white man. I just thought—"

"It's all right, son. It weren't your fault. Next thing is to get him to a doctor, if he lasts out that long."

Although he felt pretty miserable because he thought he had killed a white

man, Young Hardesty was not so overcome that he failed to pick up the rifles of the strangers and cache them out of sight. He considered them legitimate spoils of war. Bedrock had gone into the tunnel to get some whisky for the wounded man.

Young Hardesty thought life a queer mixture of hate and pity. You were forced to shoot a man down or get shot yourself. Then you got busy and tried to save his life. Even some of the hardest characters would do that. Yes, it was queer, all right. One minute you wanted to kill a man, and the next you wanted to save him. Why? Was it because you felt you had done wrong, or because your enemy was helpless, and needed help?

Young Hardesty came to himself with a shout. "The other fella is gettin' away."

Busy over the wounded man, Bedrock glanced up. The man he had battered unconscious, was on his feet. Without even a glance at his wounded companion, he staggered toward the spring trail.

"Let him go," said Bedrock. "Any man that would leave his pardner in a fix like this ain't worth shooting."

"He'll come back some day and blow your head off." Young Hardesty watched the man in the black hat disappear in the hillside brush.

OCCASIONALLY Bedrock bought provisions at Benson, a small settlement some five or six miles below the Mebbyso mine. Not being on a railroad, Benson's facilities were limited. There was no regular mail service, no doctor. Medicines were confined to the patent variety in the general store. There was nothing to do but to take the wounded man to Bowdry, some thirty miles north. There was one chance in a thousand that a doctor might save him.

The wounded man could not sit a horse. Bedrock was forced to send Young Hardesty to Benson for a buckboard. "You can tell old man Benson what I want it for. Likewise, tell him to send me some whisky if he can spare it. Tell him I'm trying to keep this here claim-jumper alive till I get him to Bowdry."

It exactly suited Young Hardesty to be doing something. Four hours after leaving the mine he was back with the buckboard hitched to a lean, pop-eyed team, ribby but active. It was late in the day when they set out on the long trail to Bowdry. Ordinarily Bedrock would have left Young Hardesty at the mine. But in this instance he did not care to risk the reappearance of the other claim-jumper, fearing that Young Hardesty might get hurt.

All night they drove across the starlit desert. Most of the time the wounded man was unconscious. Once he asked for water. Another time, when they stopped to rest the horses at Point of Rocks, he asked Bedrock where he was taking him. It was long past daylight when they reached Bowdry, after twelve hours of steady driving.

Before they reached the doctor's office, they were halted by the town marshal. Young Hardesty, who had once swept out saloons in Bowdry to make his living, knew this burly, whisky-drinking Whalen, and didn't like him. Bedrock himself had no use for Whalen, but he respected the law. Consequently, when Whalen asked what was under the tarp on the buckboard, Bedrock told him. Whalen lifted the tarp.

"You won't need a doctor," he said, after staring at the man for a moment. "He's dead."

The news that Bedrock had shot and killed Tom Hicks at the Mebbyso mine spread like the proverbial grass fire. The townsfolk seemed to take pleasure in elaborating the tragedy. Young Hardesty was so scared that he was dumb. But why did folks say Bedrock did the shooting?

Bedrock himself did not deny the charge. This puzzled Young Hardesty. But when Whalen told Bedrock he would have to lock him up, Young Hardesty came to his senses. They were in the town marshal's office. With them were the doctor, the local newspaperman, and, for a reason which Bedrock did not at first appreciate, the proprietor of the Silver City saloon.

"Bedrock didn't shoot him. I shot him," declared Young Hardesty. "He was holdin' up my pardner. Said if he talked any more he would bump him off. They plugged our pipe line. The other fella—he got away."

"What other fellow?" Whalen glanced at the saloon-keeper.

"A fella in a black hat, kind of short. He would'a' shot Bedrock if my pardner hadn't hauled off and knocked him flat. They was tryin' to jump our claim."

Whalen stepped outside. Presently he returned with the man Young Hardesty had been talking about—the man in the black hat. "Here's the layout, Bob," said Whalen. "Tell me exactly what happened."

Bedrock raised his hand as if about to speak, then seemed to change his mind.

"I'll do that," said the man in the black hat. "Tom and me was huntin' deer up in the timber. We dropped down to the mine to see if we could get some grub. Our supply was about run out." He gestured toward Bedrock. "The old man was packin' a Winchester. He told us we couldn't get any grub there. 'Get goin',' he says, 'and get goin' quick.' Tom started to argue with him. The old man jerks the Winchester to his shoulder and lets Tom have it. I jumped onto the old man. But him and the kid was too much for me."

Whalen addressed Bedrock. "How about it?"

"Hicks threw down his carbine on me and I let him have it."

The saloon-keeper stepped forward. "Looks to me like cold-blooded murder."

"You ought to be a good judge of murder," said Bedrock quietly. "Only I reckon it wasn't the kind of cold-blooded murder you were expecting."

"What the hell do you mean?"

"Just what I said. It ain't so hard to figure. The man you call Bob told his story too easy. He didn't ask to hear what me or the boy had to say. When he and his pardner stuck me up, I asked 'em who hired 'em to jump our claim. Mebby you can tell me."

The paunchy saloon-keeper swung his arm. Before anyone could interfere, Bedrock caught his balance. His great arm shot out like a flash. The saloon-keeper went down in a heap.

Young Hardesty never knew just what happened after that. There was a turmoil of flailing arms and stamping feet. When the dust settled, Bedrock was handcuffed. Whalen was wiping blood from his own face. Breathless from kicking and clawing, Young Hardesty stood looking at his partner.

"It's all right, son," said Bedrock. "You just take the team back to Benson. They won't hold me long, after the judge hears what I've got to say."

Whalen turned on Young Hardesty. "I'll take care of that team. And you too, you dam' little wildcat."

IT WAS no secret in Bowdry that the town marshal, the owner of the Silver City saloon, and the justice of the peace, were three of a kind. Bedrock's appeal for a hearing got no farther than the jail door. His request for a lawyer was denied. To most of the citizens of Bowdry, Bedrock was an old desert rat who had lost his temper and killed Tom Hicks. Young Hardesty had the reputation of being a tough kid.

Both Tom Hicks and his partner Enderly had been considered shiftless and

good for nothing. But that did not inspire any sympathy for Bedrock. That the owner of the saloon, backed by his two colleagues, had hired Hicks and Enderly to jump the Mebbyso claim was not considered a fact merely because Bedrock had accused the saloon-keeper.

It is true that two or three of the more generous-minded citizens suggested to Whalen that he turn Young Hardesty loose. But that was just what the city marshal did not intend to do. In answer to the appeal, Whalen quoted law. The kid was an accomplice. The justice of the peace had advised keeping him where he was until the trial.

A week went by, and still no word as to the date of the trial. Bedrock spent the long hours smoking his pipe and talking with Young Hardesty. Young Hardesty fretted.

"Why," he complained to Bedrock, "them fellas can hold us here till past time to do our assessment work, and then step in and take the mine. And we couldn't do a dam' thing about it."

Bedrock nodded. "We're up a high tree, son. But I been doing some thinking. Thinking doesn't always get you what you want, but it's a powerful help toward hatching ideas. And somehow, I got an idea that we'll climb down this high tree before Whalen and his friends chop it off at the roots."

"I'd sure like to chop him off at the roots," snorted Young Hardesty.

That afternoon the town marshal, accompanied by a young, neatly-dressed man, entered the jail.

"You been belly-achin' about not havin' a lawyer." Whalen indicated his companion. "This is Mr. Berry. He comes from back East. He's a law shark. You can tell him your troubles."

"Much obliged, Whalen. You hiring him, or me?"

"Mr. Whalen told me about your case," said Berry. "I thought if you wished to retain me, I might be of some service."

"Not if Whalen is holding the reins," piped Young Hardesty.

"Wait a minute, son." Bedrock turned to the lawyer. "I'll talk with you."

The town marshal departed. Berry glanced round the one room jail. Deliberately he winked at Bedrock and shrugged his shoulders. When assured that Whalen was actually gone, he told Bedrock that he had heard about the shooting; that he didn't believe a word Bob Enderly had said, and that he was willing to do all in his power to see that Bedrock and his partner got a fair trial. After Bedrock had told his side of it, ably assisted by Young Hardesty, the lawyer shook his head. "It's obviously a frame-up. They're after your property. I'm an outsider, a new man in town. Came here for my health. I don't know that I can do a thing for you. But I'll do what I can."

"That's mighty generous, young man. It's only fair to tell you you're up against a hard crowd. Whalen and his friends have got this town sewed up in a sack."

Berry's eyes gleamed. "We'll rip it open, quietly, and let something out."

"Us, mebby?" Young Hardesty gazed shrewdly at the lawyer.

Mr. Berry nodded.

"That," he said slowly, "may not be impossible."

"I've got two thousand dollars in the bank," said Bedrock. "Get us out of here and it's yours."

"If I get you an acquittal, my fee will be five hundred. I'm not attempting this case altogether for the money, although God knows I need it." He drew close to Bedrock. "The only way I was able to get in here was to pretend I was Whalen's friend. He wants the public to think he is giving you a square deal."

"Square deal!" Young Hardesty elaborated the theme in language which highly amused the man from the East.

Berry's eyes twinkled. "After spending three months here, I am forced to

admit that Bowdry is rotten, and that the gentleman you refer to smells to heaven. But the climate is wonderful."

After asking Bedrock a few questions, he left. Bedrock and Young Hardesty gazed at one another.

"He talks all right," declared Young Hardesty. "But law books ain't goin' to get us out of this."

Bedrock smiled. "I've seen a law book used to prop a door open. We'll hold our horses, son, and save 'em for the hill ahead."

The next day Mr. Berry appeared, escorted by Whalen, who left him with the prisoners. The young lawyer had a big, calf-bound volume under his arm. Long after Whalen had left, Berry sat talking, the book on his knee. The lawyer reviewed Bedrock's case.

"I sat up most of the night studying conditions," declared Berry. "About daybreak I came to the conclusion that as things stand you haven't the ghost of a chance. Whalen is going to take you two over to the county seat for trial. That man Hicks and his partner came from that district. I don't have to tell you which way a jury would vote."

Bedrock shrugged. "Did you hear when he would be taking us to the county seat?"

"Sometime tomorrow. I happen to know because I am supposed to toddle along and represent you at the trial."

Young Hardesty fixed the lawyer with a dark, intense gaze. "Well, ain't you?"

"Not a toddle. I'm going to leave you now." He tapped the book with his finger. "I would suggest that you peruse this volume carefully. You may have to handle your own case."

When the city marshal came to let Berry out, Young Hardesty was standing gazing through the narrow window. Bedrock, smoking his pipe, seemed deeply interested in a big, calf-bound law book. Whalen smiled to himself.

"Gosh A'mighty!" whispered Bedrock shortly after they had left. Young Hardesty came from the window. Bedrock had opened the book. The first few pages were intact. But beyond that the interior of the volume had been cut out in a rough oblong some three inches deep. In the hollow rested a Colt's pistol. Alongside it a folded slip of paper. On it was penciled, "After much thought I have concluded that this is about the only law that will fit your case."

"Doggone!" cried Young Hardesty.

Bedrock slipped the six-shooter into the waistband of his overalls beneath his shirt.

BOWDRY was a tough town. Its citizens, for the most part, were controlled by Whalen and his associates. A few exceptions were in sympathy with Bedrock and his young partner. Already this hopeless minority had approached Whalen, asking him to release the prisoners on bail. Whalen refused. When the hopeless minority said they would do something about it, Whalen laughed. But he placed a guard in front of the jail each night. The jail was situated just across the street from the Silver City saloon, where Whalen spent much of his time.

The guard was a young cowpuncher from the hills who had once befriended Whalen. The guard's name was Stamp. He aspired to become a peace officer.

Approaching the small, barred window in the jail door, Stamp informed Bedrock that it was a fine evening.

"Fine evenin' your shirt tail!" It was Young Hardesty, who happened to be at the window.

"What's that you said?" Bedrock had thought Young Hardesty was talking to himself.

"There's a cow chaser out here, afoot. He acts like he's just learnin' to walk."

"I'm the new guard," declared Stamp. "Anything I can do for you?"

Bedrock came to the window. "I reckon you could. But it would get you into trouble, so I'm not asking you."

"If you mean turning you loose. But any little favor, mebby."

"There was one thing I'd like before they take us to the county seat. I'd be willing to pay for it."

Stamp had recently been eyeing the revelers going in and out of the Silver City saloon. He had a long night ahead. A little drink once in a while wouldn't do any harm. And what was it Bedrock wanted?

"We ain't had water to wash in, or a towel and soap, for a week. Just drinking water. I ain't proud—but I would like to wash up before they take us over to court."

"I reckon that's all right." Stamp was obviously waiting for the cash with which to make the purchase.

Bedrock thrust his hand through the barred window. Stamp took the two silver dollars.

"Just a minute," said Bedrock. "It gets mighty dull, just setting here waiting. Suppose you fetch along a pack of cards. The boy and I like to play pinochle. Fetch along a candle, too, if it ain't too much trouble."

Stamp departed. He could borrow a towel and soap from the wash room in the Silver City saloon. The bartender would lend him a pack of cards. There would still be left two dollars to spend on drinks during the night.

Young Hardesty wondered what Bedrock was up to. They had never played pinochle together. And as for the towel and soap, it was all right to wash up once in a while. But what was the good of it now?

Bedrock explained. Young Hardesty was profanely enthusiastic. Now there would be something doing!

In about ten minutes Stamp returned with the towel and soap, the candle and a pack of cards. While he had been gone Young Hardesty had been busily whittling a hole in the door opposite the hasp and padlock on the outside. This was strictly his own idea. Bedrock had hoped that the guard would comply with his request and bring a bucket of water. This would necessitate opening the door. But, as Young Hardesty had surmised, Stamp didn't intend to unlock the door. He did not fetch the water. His excuse—he couldn't find a bucket.

"That's all right," said Bedrock. "We got a pitcher of drinking water. We can make out."

As the soap, candle and cards, wrapped in the towel, were thrust through the barred window, Bedrock's hands closed on the guard's wrist. Instantly Stamp, whose right arm was free, reached for his gun. Bedrock heaved. Stamp was drawn so close to the door he could not bring his gun into action immediately. When he did shove it through the window, almost against Bedrock's chest, Young Hardesty grabbed the guard's other wrist and dragged it down. The muffled shot that followed bored a hole in the jail floor.

"Never touched me," said Young Hardesty. "Hit him on the head before he hollers."

Shoving the flat of his hand against the guard's face, Bedrock told Young Hardesty to take off his belt and tie Stamp's wrists. Stamp struggled and kicked, gasping as Bedrock pushed his head back.

"Brace your feet against the door and haul on his arms so he can't back away. That's the idea." Bedrock whipped the towel from the floor, ran it round the back of Stamp's neck, brought the ends through and tied them. The guard's face was drawn against the bars so he could not move his head. Meanwhile, Stamp, to attract attention, kicked vigorously on the door. Bedrock shoved his big hand between the towel and Stamp's neck and twisted. Stamp gasped and ceased kicking.

Miners, townsfolk and cowhands

stamped into and out of the Silver City saloon across the street. Cowponies stood at the hitch rail, their heads sharply silhouetted in the glow from the saloon windows. It was Saturday night. Bowdry, in its customary fashion, was industriously getting drunk.

IN THE shadowy jail, barely visible across the street, Bedrock and Young Hardesty held a council of war. Bedrock, never keen to make war when he could circumnavigate, had come to the end of his rope. From now on it was war. Young Hardesty was only too willing to volunteer. If anybody tried to stop them when they broke jail, he was for removing such obstruction with gunpowder.

"Easy, son." Bedrock gestured. "We ain't out of here, yet. And as for shooting anybody, it may be necessary, but we'll use a little judgment. First off, what's your idea of whittling a hole in the door? It would take you all night to make a hole big enough to get your hand through. And then you wouldn't have the key."

Young Hardesty grunted as he dug with his jacknife. "The padlock is hangin' right opposite this hole I'm makin'. When I get the hole through, all we got to do is take your gun and blow the dam' lock inside out. If we had to shoot clean through the wood, the slug wouldn't have no jolt to it."

Glancing past the guard's head, Bedrock saw Whalen step from the saloon doorway. The town marshal was gazing at the jail. Young Hardesty ceased whittling. "What's the matter, boss?"

Bedrock stood a pace back from the window, his gun poised. Whalen was coming toward the jail. "Whalen. I'm giving him one more step. . ." Bedrock lowered his gun. The town marshal had turned back toward the saloon. He had seen his new guard standing close to the window, evidently visiting with the prisoners.

"Git hold of that cowchaser's neck," said Young Hardesty. "I'm goin' to blow the lock off."

"Wait a minute, son." A cowboy boiled out of the saloon, jerked his pony's tie rope loose, and mounting, spurred in a circle, firing his gun in sheer alcoholic exuberance. Men appeared in the saloon doorway, laughed, returned to the bar. Young Hardesty fired through the door. The padlock leaped and clattered, but remained intact. He fired again. The padlock clattered, but still hung in the staple. A third shot put the finishing touches on the job.

The drunken cowboy, out of ammunition, had returned to the saloon. About to shoulder the door open, Bedrock paused. Down the street came a rider, his pony's head low. For the time being, the street was empty, save for this lone horseman. The man's hands were resting on the saddle horn, the reins loose. As he came opposite the jail, Young Hardesty pricked up his ears. The stranger was singing softly—a Spanish song that Young Hardesty knew. He had heard but one man sing it—Tonto Charley.

But Tonto Charley was an outlaw, and somewhere down in Mexico. It couldn't be Tonto. He wouldn't risk being seen in Bowdry.

"What you doing?" said Bedrock. But paying no attention, Young Hardesty shoved the jail door open and stepped out into the starlit street.

"Tonto," he called, his voice low.

The horseman's hand left the saddle horn. The pony stopped. "Who's that?" It was Tonto Charley's voice.

"It's me—Joe Hardesty."

"Well it would be, now wouldn't it! How's Bedrock?"

"In a hell of a fix. They got us in jail. They're goin' to take us over to Enright to hang us for shootin' a fella that was jumpin' our claim. We're afoot, and—"

"Got you in jail. Then what you doin' out here?"

"What I mean—we just busted loose. But we're *afoot*. Whalen is over there." Young Hardesty gestured toward the saloon. "If he shows up—"

Tonto Charley chuckled. "There's six or eight ponies standin' right handy. I'd say, you and Bedrock had better take a little ride."

"I dunno. I reckon Bedrock wouldn't steal a horse."

"When a man sees a loop danglin' over his head, he'll steal anything. You go back and tell Bedrock there's a friend out here, with a couple of horses. Curl your tail." In spite of his easy manner, Tonto Charley's gaze was alert. Three years ago he had left Bowdry in haste. Bedrock and Young Hardesty had befriended him when he sorely needed help. Here was a chance to do something in return.

Easing his horse to the hitch rail, he untied two of the most likely looking ponies and led them over to the jail.

Bedrock was puzzled. Tonto was the last man he had expected to see. And Tonto with two lead horses but added to Bedrock's bewilderment. If Bedrock suspected the ownership of the horses, he said nothing. This glove so opportunely dropped from the sky seemed to fit. Bedrock would fight fire with fire.

"We'll drift out easy," said Tonto. "I'll side you for a spell."

But things had been going altogether too smoothly to suit the gods of chance. For the moment, Bedrock and his partner had overlooked the new guard, pinioned to the jail door. Stamp, however, had not forgotten them. As they mounted the stolen ponies, Stamp let out a yell. Followed by three or four of his companions, Whalen came from the saloon on the run.

"Got to stop that." Tonto wheeled his horse. "You fellas ride right along."

"They'll get you sure, Tonto!"

"That's all right, son. I've had it comin' for quite a spell."

"Hold on, Joe!" Bedrock's hand was on Young Hardesty's arm. "Where you going?"

"Think I'm goin' to run, and let him do the coverin' up for me? Tonto and me was pardners. Dam' you, Bedrock, let go my arm!" Jerking free, Young Hardesty reined round. Tonto and the men in the street seemed to be talking quietly together. Someone was over at the jail trying to get Stamp loose from the door. Young Hardesty could hear Tonto's voice, low and pleasant.

"Friends of mine," he was saying. "You fellas don't want to stop them. You only think you do."

A gun flashed. Tonto's arm chopped up and down. The group in the street spread and made for cover. Whalen lay on his back, a hole in his chest.

Suddenly, without knowing just how it came about, Young Hardesty found himself alongside Bedrock, spurring down the long winding road that led to the desert. When a half mile or so out of town, Tonto caught up with them.

"Change mounts with me," he said to Young Hardesty. "You're light. My cayuse is pretty nigh played out, but he can carry you easy."

FOR THREE days, Tonto Charley, Bedrock and his partner hid out in the brush above the Mebbyso mine, only going down to the flat for provisions. The morning of the fourth day they were still in the brush, watching the desert below, when a horseman appeared coming from the direction of Point of Rocks. As the distant figure drew nearer to the foothills, Tonto laughed. "He's no cowhand or peace officer. Looks like he's headed for the mine. Who in hell would be wearin' a derby hat in this country?"

Young Hardesty started up. "Berry!"

"Who's Berry?"

"Law shark. Lives in Bowdry. He cut

a hole in a law book and stuck a gun in it—"

"He would," said Tonto. "Is he a friend of yours?"

"I take it he is." Bedrock rose. "He's up on the mine flat now, looking like he'd lost something."

"Mebby I can find it for him." Tonto, with his usual disregard of risk, started down toward the mine. The partners saw him meet Berry, talk with him. Tonto waved his arm. He seemed to be holding a newspaper.

"Let's go down and see," said Bedrock.

That night they made their usual camp at the mine. Close to the fire sat Berry, so stiff he could hardly move. Bedrock was reading aloud from the newspaper Berry had brought. When he had finished reading, Bedrock folded the paper carefully and tucked it into a pack-sack.

"So Whalen confessed—when he thought he was going to cross over," Tonto was saying. "I ain't surprised. I always figured he was yellow."

"Doctor says he's got an even chance to pull through." Berry shrugged.

"If he does, that will mean more trouble for us," said Bedrock.

Berry shook his head. "I don't think so. The day after you left a number of citizens got together and invited me to join them." In spite of his weariness Berry's blue eyes twinkled. "We established the first Law and Order League Bowdry has ever known. When they heard about it, the miners came in strong. Whalen's confessed attempt to jump your claim is responsible for their interest in a new deal all round. As your attorney, I felt obliged to inform you as to your present status as a citizen. The Law and Order League declared the killing of that man Hicks to be an act of self-defense. As their attorney, I tender you a vote of thanks."

Tonto Charley stared at the young lawyer. "So that's how the cat jumped?"

"Exactly, Mr. Tonto. Pardon me if I am mistaken. You seem to be exceedingly interested in my hat. Is there anything wrong with it?"

"I'm more interested in what's under it," chuckled Tonto. "You never can tell."

The following morning, stiff and sore, Berry took the long trail to Bowdry. In spite of his lack of experience, he insisted on taking the two borrowed horses back to town. Not, he declared, because he cared a hoot who owned them. He merely wished to establish his clients as honest men in the eyes of the community. Aside from enough provisions and water to see him through, he had tucked in his pocket Bedrock's check for five hundred dollars.

Now that they were out of the woods, Young Hardesty began to feel that five hundred dollars was a whale of a sum to pay for a lawyer's services. Finally he said so to Bedrock.

Bedrock spoke gravely. "It ain't the money, son. It's the idea. Think it over a spell."

Young Hardesty thought it over. "But we got us out just as much as he did. And then there was Tonto."

"Hell!" said Tonto. "He earned the five hundred makin' that ride. Which reminds me. I'll be pullin' my freight tomorrow mornin'. Pony will be rested up by then."

Young Hardesty felt his heart sink. His idol, Tonto Charley, was leaving—and he had hardly arrived.

"Which way you headed?" he asked.

Tonto chuckled. "Most any direction that ain't right here. I got to keep on the move. Stick to minin', son. You'll live longer."

Young Hardesty wasn't so sure about that. He stood gazing out across the desert. Finally he became aware that Tonto was looking at him. Something of admiration, something of affection shone in Tonto's eyes. Catching Young Hardesty's glance, Tonto shrugged, and slowly curled a brown paper cigarette.

# THE CAMP-FIRE

*Where readers, writers and adventurers meet.*

AS many of you know, the creator of Hashknife Hartley and Sleepy Stevens and the founder of the town of Piperock has been elected ruler of baseball on the West Coast.

It is a high honor, and congratulations had to be given, but along with all that we didn't relish the thought that the only way we could keep track of our author was to order a San Francisco paper.

For one thing, we figured we'd miss his letters, such as:

"How is the pup coming? Doggone it, I've kinda started a hankering for another pup. Gawd knows, I've got enough to do without another one. I've got two now—an Irish Water Spaniel and a Springer. With those two on my hands, I've also got two horses, a flock of wild ducks, quail, an aviary full of parrakeets, et cettery, pools full of goldfish, white turkeys, a couple hundred fancy chickens—my Gawd, what a life!"

And here's a rodeo item:

"I bulldogged a turkey gobbler the other day, dislocated my right shoulder, and was attended by a conclave of doctors. Then I caught a hell of a cold. I'm off turkeys, even for Thanksgiving."

More important, I inquired if some of fiction's best Western characters were going to be left plumb afoot. Here is the latest word, on stationery of the Pacific Coast Baseball League, Office of W. C. Tuttle, President:

"Just as soon as I can take off my spikes, I'm doing some stories for you. I've got eight clubs to monkey with, carrying an oil-can in one hand and a monkey-wrench in the other. But I'll live through it—you'll hear from me soon. Tut."

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THE novelette by Georges Surdez raises a point we've all heard about—the Foreign Legion as a refuge for criminals. How true is it that a wanted man can go into the Legion under a new name and spend his enlistment there safely—safe, at least, from the police? Surdez is an authority, and I appealed to him. The Legion is not a safe haven for criminals; but as you will see, if a man is a good soldier and his officers and comrades like him, they have ways of sticking together against the world of civilians. Goerges Surdez's letter gives interesting sidelights on the Legion and

colonial fighting in general, and I am glad to print it entire:

One of the fascinating legends concerning the French Foreign Legion claims that a man, once enlisted, will not be surrendered to police authorities. That is foolish, of course, as it would turn a search for a criminal into a race to a recruiting bureau. The Legion gives up a criminal when claimed, and extradition operates in the Corps as elsewhere. The minor criminal is not bothered, because of the expense involved in bringing him back from North Africa or Asia. I have seen a Legionnaire taken in custody by police officials from France, and I have been told of a number of other instances. Herewith the one clipping left me on the subject, and you can see that the killers were taken out of the Legion by the local gendarmes. They had strangled an Arab for forty cents, and the slaying of natives in a private undertaking is not encouraged.

However, the Legion is reluctant to give up its members, and officers yield only before the proper papers. A man who has committed an ignoble crime, such as murder, will not be protected for long—but there are evidently some loopholes for those who have perpetrated lesser crimes. I saw a discharged Legionnaire, already in his civilian garb (the clumsy garments called 'Clemenceau' in the Legion, after the famous politician who ordained that discharged soldiers should be rigged out as civilians) picked up by plain-clothes men in an Algerian railroad station. I spoke to one of the cops in the dining car later, and he told me that the chap had taken sixty thousand francs from the firm employing him, seven years before, and that it had been impossible to get him out of the service.

Another exception: A Legion captain told me that he had received a police circular bearing the description and photograph of a man in his outfit. This Legionnaire, hailing from Northern Europe, had killed his sweetheart in a fit of jealousy. He was very brave, had been cited six times, and the captain told me he realized, at sight of the circular, that the fellow was trying to get himself killed. He thought—the captain—that it would be more useful all around for the pursued man to find a decent finish than to be dragged through a court and to prison. Unwilling to shoulder the whole burden himself, he summoned his officers and noncoms, told them of the circular and merely added: "Personally, I do not identify the man. Take a look and see what you think." One after another, fourteen men looked at the photograph, looked up and shook their heads. And the captain returned the paper with the remark: "Unidentified here." And he added that his colleagues formed as good a jury as might be gathered anywhere to judge of human failings. The murderer, at the time a sergeant, was pointed out to me. I ran into him later, and he was a pretty fine fellow.

In a Saharan outpost, I was told that the hospital orderly, a youngish chap, had fled Germany because he had done those things a doctor is not supposed to do—and had been found out. Everybody admitted that he was a better surgeon than the medical captain in charge. There had been no attempt to extradite him. Had there been, I think his comrades and his chiefs would have stretched a point, or a dozen points.

As in all things concerned with the Legion, one discovers that the legend, false in fact and written record, often holds true in spirit.

That there are some murderers in the Legion is certain—there must be in twenty-five to thirty thousand assorted drifters, adventurers, gentlemen of fortune. It is known that Bela Kiss, the Austrian Blue-Beard (he sealed about a dozen women in large tin containers) spent some years in the Corps. But he had been discharged when the cops traced him there and has not been caught until now.

In the charming establishments where Legionnaires congregate when funds and opportunity allow, and in which I repeatedly risked my immortal soul for the sake of my profession, I have listened to many drunken yarns—heard confessions of murders, rapes, thefts and even spent a memorable night listening to the wanderings of a self-admitted necrophile. How much of it was true, I can't tell. The average imagination is pretty lively in the Legion, and combining an interested listener with the proper doses of strong fluids brings astonishing yarns.

As you know, I wrote the stuff in the story concerning unseasonal rains and the danger of hesitation in colonial warfare before the Italians got into trouble around Makale. I believe that they are due for a lot more grief as time goes on—for the Ethiopians have had time to reach the fighting zone and have shown that they could take it without cracking up.

I mention that aviation is not the resistless weapon it is supposed to be in colonial warfare. The French used it in Morocco and Syria, the British on the North Indian Border, I believe that the Marine Corps in Nicaragua employed a few machines against Sandino. The whole trouble seems to be that planes soar away after dropping their bombs,

and the natives come out of hiding, dust themselves off and remark: "So what?"

I believe that the Ethiopians (those who don't know the value of propaganda) accept air raids in the spirit they're offered: Warlike and nasty, but understandable. When they fight, they also use all the weapons they have. As for their morale being shattered more than for the duration of the danger, I don't believe it.

I had a war veteran working for me, a rather large, very black specimen from the Upper Baoule Country of the Ivory Coast, with tribal scars and his teeth filed to sharp points. The French had caught him alive, put a pair of pants on his legs, a Lebel rifle in his hands, and sent him to save civilization. He had received a couple of crosses and medals, learned a lot of French.

Naturally, I wondered about the effect of his four years in Europe, three of them spent fighting. And I asked him what, during the whole sojourn, had most impressed him, what had startled him—and waited for the answer with bated breath. He answered immediately what had surprised him most. The comfort stations in French cities, because you had to *pay!* That was silly and unnatural to him. I was not satisfied, although I had not expected him to say that his greatest thrill had been the sight of the French Flag flying over Strasbourg once more. He thought Alsace was a sister of Joan of Arc. No blame to him—they were so often mentioned together.

I wanted his war impressions, so I asked another question: What had frightened him most? This time he licked his lips, scratched his thigh (the African negro scratches his thighs when puzzled as we scratch our heads) and finally replied: The big horses he had seen in Marseilles when he had first landed. He had run at the sight of them and a sergeant had punished him. After considerable pressing, he agreed that he did not like bombardments; his ears always felt funny and achy after them. Yes, he admitted, he had been frightened when shells blew his comrades to pieces. But, he said, after such times, which lasted only a day or so, they would be taken out of the fighting to rest, which had been nice.

Judging by the records, the Italians are not successful colonial soldiers. A British journalist described how many thousands of them were held in Tripoli city for weeks by a few hundred Turks. In Tunisia, I heard much of their troubles in 1915. On one occasion, an Italian garrison of more than one thousand men asked French help, and seventy native *Meharistes* led by three European officers started out, dispersed the besiegers. The lack of success of Italians *en masse* is a mystery to me—the individual Italian is a fine soldier, enduring and brave—the Legion counts many Italian heroes—and I also know that the American soldiers of Italian extraction made a fine record.

The episode in the story concerning the captain's miraculous recovery from fever through the use of massive doses of cognac is, believe it or not, based on fact. A retired adjutant of Legion, a splendid old German, who told me many stories, narrated it as a personal experience—and told it before men who had been with him when it happened, in Syria. He had been left dying in a field-hospital, and was brought out of coma by the fusillade. Left alone while the first wounded were being treated, he found cognac, which had been forbidden him, drank a quart. The rest was a Gargantuan episode, which would have been incredible in fiction: A ride to the front line on a stolen horse, a headlong charge, wearing nothing but his adjutant's *képi*, slippers and a hospital shirt that left him nude from the buttocks down. The man has died, so I can give his name, not his real one but that under which he is listed in Legion records: Walter—Knight of the Legion of Honor, Military Medal, Crosses, citations galore, fifty-three battles, combats etc.

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A NEW member of the Writers' Brigade in this issue—her name is Peggy von der Goltz. We liked the yarn, but blinked at the name—it's been several years since a woman appeared on our contents page, though there used to be Natalie Sokoloff, with her Russian stories, B. M. Bower of "Chip of the Flying U" fame, and others.

Probably there will be no surprise in the swordfish story for the men who troll or surfcast in salt water. They'll know of the former president of the Salt Water Anglers of America, Mrs. Oliver Grinnell, and her twenty-hour fight with a four hundred pound swordfish. They may know also that Lynn Bogue Hunt, who illustrated the story, is one of our leading salt water fishermen for the big-game ones.

Mrs. von der Goltz says:

I was born in Montgomery County, Kentucky, and grew up there. I have always been interested in animals—my first aquarium was a rain barrel at the corner of the stable.

I have done a good deal of salt water fishing with light tackle—I've landed sixteen pound weaks with a six ounce bass rod and six thread line.

Since 1925 my husband and I have worked extensively with animals. We have farmed; have bred, shown, and judged shepherd dogs. And for several years we ran a pet shop. I established the first free clinic for birds in New York. And always we had fish, gold fish, tropical fish, wild native fishes.

After several years of study I read a paper at the American Museum of Natural History on the behaviour of fishes, which is still my chief interest. The newspapers considered it news that I had shown that some fishes behave intelligently. At that time I had just begun writing factual articles about animals. I decided to try my hand at fiction, and my first story, "The Water Hazard," which dealt with the life of a sun fish was printed in the *Atlantic Monthly*. Since that time the *Atlantic* has printed another story of the water hazard, and I have sold many articles and some fiction to other publications.

I am quite proud of being the only gal in *Adventure*.

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HENRY LA COSSITT'S name has appeared on our contents page a number of times. He was born in Shreveport, La. At the age of three his mother—his father having died—brought him to Hannibal, Mo., where his boyhood was spent. He was educated in the Hannibal public schools and at the University of Missouri. He has been, at various times, cowhand, seaman, publicity man, reporter, advertising man, ghost writer, magazine editor, director of photography, world traveler, screen playright. He is now in his seventh year of married life and lives in Connecticut.

Two of his ADVENTURE stories, "The Mob" and "Deadline at Dawn," were adapted to the screen. "Deadline at Dawn" was produced as "Night Ride", with Joseph Schildkraut and Edward G. Robinson. "The Mob" reached the screen as "The Homicide Squad" and starred Leo Carillo.

Concerning his story, he says:

Having traveled in Mexico and having read extensively of the Conquest, I have been fascinated by the probability that Pizarro was with Cortes and learned from him lessons that were to be valuable later in Peru.

In 'The True History of the Conquest of Mexico', written in 1568 by Captain Bernal Diaz del Castillo, who, beneath his name on the title page wrote arrogantly, 'One of the Conquerors', and who is considered by many to be the most reliable source on the Conquest, we find this sentence in the chapter dealing with the Narvaez expedition and the Battle of Cempoal. 'Cortes selected seventy soldiers, of which number I was one, and put us under the command of Pizarro, an active lad, whose name however was at that time as little known as that of Peru.'

"Prescott, describing the same events, says in 'The Conquest of Mexico': 'The largest division of the force was placed under Christoval de Olid, or, according to some authorities, of Pizarro, one of that family so renowned in the subsequent Conquest of Peru.'

"There were six bearers of the name Pizarro associated with the Conquest of Peru: Francisco, of course; and besides his three brothers—Juan, Gonzalo, and Hernando—there were his kinsmen, the writer Pedro Pizarro and *el comendador*, Pizarro y Orellano.

"Speaking of Pizarro's journey to the court of Charles V, Prescott says: 'It is even said that Pizarro would have found it difficult to raise necessary funds, but for the seasonable aid of Cortes, a native of Estremedura like himself, *his companion in arms in an early day*, and, according to some, his kinsman.'

"Pizarro's earlier life is sometimes well known, sometimes obscure. It is said that, as a mere youth, he served in Italy, that he later accompanied Columbus, and it is known that he was with Balboa at the discovery of the Pacific. In 1515 he was selected to traffic with the Indians on the Pacific side of the Isthmus of Panama. How long he was there and what he did thereafter is highly conjectural. He turns up again in 1522, planning his expedition to the southern continent, which resulted in his conquest of the Inca empire. In the interim, it is probable that he went to Mexico with Cortes and took part in the reduction of the Astec empire. Certainly there are striking examples of parallel strategy in the actions of both gen-

erals, as witness Cortes' treacherous kidnapping of Montezuma, and Pizarro's ruthless seizure of the Inca, Atahualpa."

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COMMANDER ELLSBERG, in answering a reader's question, made some reference to the subject of this letter from S. C. Russell, Acting Director of Posts, Executive Department, Panama Canal Zone. As Commander Ellsberg has told me, all treasure-hunting promotions should be examined with a very wary eye. Many have proved to be stock-selling schemes in which the money was sunk deeper than the dubious doubloons.

The attention of this office has been called to an article appearing in *Adventure* of the issue of September 15, 1935, in the *Ask Adventure Department*, concerning statements made by Commander Edward Ellsberg, U.S.N.R., in regard to the device used by Lt. George Williams of Ancon, C. Z., for the discovery of gold and buried treasure.

Although I have not read the article in question, it is considered advisable to repeat information in substance that has been forwarded to other publications in the United States. A fraud order issued by the Post Office Department on May 15, 1933, against George Williams, or Lt. (?) George Williams, R.N.R., charged with the use of the mails for conducting a scheme for obtaining money through the mails by means of false and fraudulent pretenses, representations and promises, is still in effect. The fraud order prohibits the use of the United States mails by Williams and requires that any mail addressed to him be returned to the writer without delivery.

Investigation discloses that Lt. (?) Williams was able to promote his scheme largely through articles which he himself wrote about himself and which were published in various newspapers and magazines in the United States. He was quoted considerably by the author of the book *Doubloons*, and to my personal knowledge, having known Lt. (?) Williams for some ten years, most of his discoveries were fictitious.

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RECENTLY we published an interesting letter, kicking like a mule, from "Another Top Kick", from Washington, D. C. He didn't send his name along. Now we have a letter for him from a man in the U. S. Border Patrol, and no way to forward it. Will "Another Top Kick", who is in the Marines, step up and give his name and address?

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MAYBE you know that among the so-called woodpulp magazines, subscriptions are usually negligible, but this is not true of *Adventure*.

A considerable and very steady proportion of our Camp-Fire followers are subscribers, and the mailing list goes round the world. This paragraph you are reading will be read also, after it has been carried across oceans, mountains, or jungle, by men of similar reading tastes and adventurous spirits in Capetown, South Africa; Ootacamund, India; Masbate, Philippine Islands; Port Howard, Falkland Islands; Ambositra, Madagascar; Kuala Lampur, Federated Malay States; Kasai, Congo Belge; Soebang, Java. We take sourdough trails into Alaska, go to all other American soil, and go to Americans in the countries (all the countries, I think) in Europe and Central and South America, and also in China, Japan, Australia.

I wish that motion picture cameras could follow some of the copies of our magazine, and films of their travels come back for us to see. Certainly many a curious conveyance and strange setting would be revealed, and men in furs and men in loin-cloths along the way.

If you want to subscribe for a time, or send a short subscription to a friend, we can make it easier. A regular subscription means a check or money order for a dollar and a half. You can put a dollar into an envelope and mail it to us at 205 East 42nd Street, New York City, for eight issues.

# ASK ADVENTURE

*information you can't get elsewhere*

**THE Seri, once savage warriors in North America, number less than a hundred today.**

Request:—Having been a reader of *Adventure* for some years, I am taking the liberty of again asking you a question or two. I noticed in the Chicago *American* an article about a trip you took to the home of the Seri Indians. I never heard of that tribe before, and I wondered if you could give me a little more information on them: their history, customs, etc. Has there been anything written about them? I have access to the University of Illinois Library here, and it is likely that they would have some of the published material. I can read Spanish, so if there is anything in that language that you know of, will you tell me what it is, and where I could get a copy?

You probably don't remember me, but a couple of years ago I wrote to you for some information regarding a horseback trip through part of Utah and Arizona. When I was working for the American Museum of Natural History in New York, I went on the Sinclair-American Museum Dinosaur Expedition to Wyoming, and later went down into the canyon country of Utah, on my own. Stayed down there three months, was considered lost, so an airplane expedition was sent down to "rescue" me. It was a good trip, and I want to thank you for your information.

—DAN L. THRAPP, Champaign, Ill.

Reply by Mr. Gordon Gordon:—I was glad to get your letter and hear from you again. You must have had a wonderful trip that summer. I was managing editor of *The Citizen* here at that time and remember the many news stories which came over the wire about the search for you.

In many ways the Seris are an interesting tribe. I have studied many Indian tribes in the Southwest and Mexico and I have yet to come across any aborigines more primitive than the Seris. The tide of civilization has barely washed over them.

They live by fishing and shooting game with the bow and arrow as they have since time immemorial. Some of the younger braves take pride in fighting wild animals, such as deer and small mountain cats, hand to hand and strangling them. They harpoon for whales, catch bass and other smaller fish, gather clams and sea turtles, and a few are adept at killing pelicans and other birds with rocks.

They buy their wives, often paying as much as two hundred pesos, about $56, in the equivalent of fish or houses or boats. This does not mean that the tribesmen are an immoral lot. They are not. They maintain a fairly high code of morals for such a primitive people but the parents of comely daughters have come to depend upon such payment as a means of supporting themselves in their old ages.

Their houses are little more than one or two-room huts constructed from the thick fibers of the cacti. The Seris live mostly in the open, using the homes only for sleeping purposes. The rest of the time, they are either working or sitting outside the hut, squatting on straw *petates*, mats, on the ground.

The tribal chieftans still dance their old "Scalp Dance", gyrating in wild hysteria about a human scalp which dangles from a pole. The scalp, of course, is that of a white

man. When the men go hunting—and in the old days when they used to raid a village—they wear an armor of deer hide which includes sleeves, helmet and a shield.

Strictly speaking, the Seris are not a tribe. They are the remnants of several tribes. When the Spanish conquerors first penetrated into Sonora, they found the Seris at Hermosillo, about two hundred miles south of Nogales, Arizona, the Tiburones on the island of Tiburon in the Gulf of California, the Guaymas near where the fishing port of Guaymas is now, and two or three other groups along the coast. After many years of warfare, and gradually as civilization kept pushing them into the more desolate regions, the Seris deserted Hermosillo and united with the Tiburones, and other groups, too, took refuge on the island of Tiburon. These, at one time, totaled several thousand. Only a century ago, they supposedly numbered about four thousand.

They were among the most savage warriors on this continent. They raided Mexican villages, killing and plundering as they went and stealing women. Through the years, their numbers were decimated until today they number less than a hundred. They migrate considerably, usually leaving Tiburon during the fishing season and coming to the mainland at Kino Bay, Sonora, directly west of Hermosillo, where they work for the fishing companies.

We found them at Kino Bay on our trip. Although the Mexican villagers are still afraid of them and refuse to go near their settlement—we offered a Mexican truck driver a nice sum to guide us there, but he wouldn't have gone if we had given him the Mexican mint—we found them childish in their welcome to us. There wasn't the least evidence of hostility as they gathered babbling around Mrs. Gordon and me. With the patience of Job, they posed for an hour while we photographed them. We had with us several sacks of dime store jelly beans—always the best weapon among primitive peoples—and they almost mobbed us when we distributed it.

Civilization has surely crushed them. Many of them are frightfully emaciated and diseased because the bulk of their food is fish. The Shamans, usually old men with a collection of superstitions, are the only doctors. One man showed us a sore hand and asked if we couldn't do something for it.

While the Seris are often pictured as a lazy, slovenly tribe, I think their environment has been largely responsible. The fish companies tell me that where the Seris are fed well and have a little money, they are industrious workers.

One interesting feature is that the women still paint their faces in various designs. Instead of being grotesque, the designs are actually beautiful. This is the only art of the Seris.

I think you would enjoy reading "The Seri" by A. L. Kroeber and published by the Southwest Museum of Los Angeles. It is the account of a scientific study in the Seri country. In the '90's W. J. McGee wrote a report on "The Seri Indians" which is among the Bureau of American Ethnology Reports (1898).

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## THE emerald needs no beautifying.

Request:—These questions are all on the emerald.

How many facets above, and how many below, the girdle of a square cut stone? Are "square cut", "emerald cut" and "table cut" all the same thing? Does a blue tinge lessen the value of an emerald; that is, is it desirable for the stone to be free from that color?

What is the appearance of the emerald in a natural state? Would an ordinary person recognize it as being different from other stones?

What are some books on the emerald that would not be too technical for a layman? Where in the United States, besides North Carolina, have these stones been found?

What price per carat are quoted on good stones at the present?

—PAUL MCGINNESS, Brookfield, Mo.

Reply by Mr. F. J. Esterlin:—Square cut, emerald cut, step cut and trap cut are all the same. Although an emerald may be cut in the same style or system of facet work as other gems there is no cut to equal the step cut for the emerald. While brilliancy is of prime importance in most gems, the emerald shows forth in all its exquisite beauty chiefly through its color and this is best retained by the simple but graceful step cut. To divide the facets into a number of smaller facets as is commonly done with other gems would be like gilding the lily, and the true beauty of the jewel would not be revealed. The color would be sacrificed for brilliance.

If the stone is square or rectangular in shape there are only two steps on the top or front each with four facets, or eight in all above the girdle. The back or under side is cut in exactly the same manner except as to num-

ber of steps. The number of steps is governed by the density of color, or the stone's translucency, or natural defects which must be taken into account. Usually four steps produce best results.

Often the emerald is cut octagonal. That is: the corner is cut off the square so that there would be four more facets on the step nearest the girdle. These extra facets have no effect other than that of symmetry of design.

If the stone is a fine one, large in size, fairly free from major flaws, blue, when not too pronounced, will enhance its value somewhat, but to carry the blue without detracting from the value of the gem the stone must be a fine one in all other respects.

The emerald is formed in a six-sided crystal with flattened ends, not pointed as is a quartz crystal, and I cannot see how anyone could confuse it with any other stone in the rough.

I believe that North Carolina is the only state where it has been found in America.

Price per carat varies greatly and is governed entirely by color, clearness, extent of flaws, general shape, etc. A *good* stone of, say, five carats could be valued at $150.00 per carat, but a *fine* stone of the same weight would certainly be worth at least $500.00 per carat.

The Smithsonian Institute can furnish you with the titles of books on this subject.

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## "TINYMITE" is a midget airplane.

Request:—How many hours are required for an amateur pilot's license?

What was the name of, or rather specifications of, the smallest man-carrying airplane ever made?

Have you any data on the plane known as "Heath Baby Bullet"?

—EDGAR T. GRESHAM, Oklahoma City, Okla.

Reply by Major Falk Harmel:—For an amateur pilot's license, twenty-five solo flying hours are required, of which at least five hours must have been within the last preceding sixty days prior to the filing of application for such license.

I have made considerable research work on midget airplanes, and it seems that the smallest of the lot is the "Tinymite" with a fifteen foot span, length of eleven and one-half feet and weight four hundred pounds; speed one hundred and twenty miles per hour, built by V. W. Payne.

Probably the next smallest plane was the Mummert "Cootie," twenty foot span, length, fourteen feet and weight three hundred pounds; speed seventy-four miles per hour, powered by Harley-Davidson engine.

I could find no reference to the Heath "Baby Bullet," although mention is made of several types of Heath planes, one the Heath "Sport Plane," which has a span of twenty-four feet; length, eighteen feet; height, six and one-half feet; gap, four feet; stagger, four feet; and area of main planes, one hundred sixty-five square feet.

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## THE Dead Sea has become a life-giving agent.

Request:—What makes the Dead Sea so buoyant? If it is the salt in it, could not this be easily extracted for commercial uses? Have any steps been taken to do this?

—GWENDOLYN SIVERTZ, Walla Walla, Wash.

Reply by Captain H. W. Eades:—The Dead Sea is the southern terminus of the River Jordan, and the level of the sea, or rather lake, for such it is, is some fifteen hundred feet below sea level, the only lake in the world so placed. Its extreme buoyancy is caused by its salt content.

Twelve hundred billion dollars has been estimated as the cash value of the potash, bromides and chlorides contained in its waters —all easily recoverable by the simple process of pumping the water into shallow ponds and letting the sun evaporate it. This project was started upon a large scale in 1930, and since then what was a mere hole in a desolate land has been transformed into a scene of great activity. Motor trucks and trains carry the chemicals into Jerusalem and the port of Haifa. The new dustless health resort of Kallia has sprung up beside the potash works, in a country visited in the past only by pious tourists, and is said to be an excellent place in which to recover from rheumatism and heart disease. Since the fertilizing potash is so cheap and abundant, the country now is said to blossom like the rose.

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## THE candid camera takes a shot of a fish.

Request:—How could I enclose an ordinary box camera or Kodak so that I can use it to take pictures under water?

—LEONARD SCHLACHT, Detroit, Mich.

Reply by Mr. Paul L. Anderson:—For under-water photography you should have a box made of sheet brass at least one-eighth inch thick, and for deep water, considerably heavier than this—one-quarter or one-half inch. For shallow water it will do to solder the joints, but for deep water they should be brazed. The cover should be flanged, and should fasten with toggles, and a rubber gasket should be used. If you are going to work in shallow water, you can probably get away with a box of one-half or three-quarter inch seasoned wood, the joints set in white lead, and the whole given two or three coats of Valspar. If you use wood, though, you will have to weight the box with sheet lead, to sink it. The eye against which you will set your camera lens should be at least one-quarter inch glass, of the grade known as "optically flat." This will be rather expensive, but you can get a price on it from the Eastman Kodak Company, Rochester, New York. If you are going to use it in deep water, you had better write to the Bausch & Lomb Optical Co., Rochester, New York, and tell them just what you want, asking them to recommend something which will stand the pressure.

You can solder a very light piece of iron wire to the release lever of your shutter, mount a small electro-magnet under it, run wires to the surface, and trip your shutter by a push-button. Of course, the batteries can be either in the box with the camera, or on the surface. You must, however, take care to have a water-tight joint where the wires leave the box, and to use wires whose insulation is water-proof. If you wish, you can take two brass stove-bolts through the box (if the box is brass you will have to insulate them where they go through) and make your connections through these. Or you can use a water-tight screw-joint packing gland, and carry the wires through this.

If you do not wish to haul the box up and wind the film around for successive exposures, you can arrange a clock-work mechanism to bring new film into position for exposure, and trip this mechanism with another electric magnet, in which case you will have to arrange a cut-off to release the magnet when the clock-work has made the proper number of turns. Or if you don't want to take this trouble, you can try an experiment or two, and note the number of seconds you have to keep the tripping magnet connected, then time yourself when using the outfit.

The camera lens should be mounted as close as possible to the eye of the box—preferably in contact with it.

If you are going to work in very deep water, toggles would probably not make the box tight enough. In this case you will have to braze lugs or a rim on the box, and fasten the lid down with bolts.

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## GREENLAND'S coal is good fuel—low in sulphur and free burning.

Request:—Please advise me what the principal minerals found in Greenland are. Are there any minerals in Greenland that are not found elsewhere in the world? If so, please list the same. Are they very expensive when bought for research purposes?

—F. M. Edmondsen, Tampa, Fla.

Reply by Mr. Victor Shaw:—There has been intensive specialized study of the geology or mineralogy of Greenland. What data we have consists of reports from the more or less superficial examination of localised areas covered by the scientific members of various polar expeditions. An added obstacle to a complete knowledge is the fact that the interior Ice Cap covers the entire island-continent, so that the only section exposed for study is an exceedingly narrow fringe on parts of its coast, particularly the western, southern, and a little of the southeastern shores. My personal study was confined on each trip to the coastal strip from Smith Sound south to the settlement of Sukkertoppen on the southwest shore. However, that really takes in the majority of exposures.

The main rock mass appears to be Archaen, the oldest eruptive rocks, with some intrusive sedimentary rocks here and there. The eastern coast, which I haven't seen myself, is said to be geologically similar to Western Europe, indicating a possible geographical connection some time. But there are many Tertiary and Cretaceous fossils on the west coast. The northwest shores are bold with great cliffs of granite or basalt and there are iron deposits wholly unworked and extent unknown. I found some deposits of muscovite with crystals eight to ten inches through, from which sheets split off were clear as window glass. South of Melville Bay there are numerous zones of shale, schist or slate intruding the rugged masses of eruptives. Near Godhavn, on the mainland shore of the Waigat Sound, I visited a large deposit of excellent grade bituminous coal. In the clay overburden that was almost a slate, I found fine fossils of the tropical vegetation and timber that existed before the earth shifted its axis. We coaled our ship there, prying off and sacking coal,

from three or four wide seams exposed near the beach, and our chief engineer said it was far better steaming coal than what we loaded at Sydney. Very low in sulphur, and free burning. I've heard since that this deposit has been worked to some extent by the Danes.

Also, there is a large deposit of cryolite down at Ivigtut, in the Arsuk Fiord, southwest shore, which is the only place in the world where this valuable mineral exists in commercial amount.

Beside the above, there has been some copper ore found with an added list of some twenty different minerals, none of which have been exploited so far as I am informed. The expedition of O. Norden Skjold back about 1912, included some expert geologists, and the book of that expedition has the results listed. You might look it up in a public library. But, I am quite sure you cannot obtain samples of any Greenland minerals, unless you chance to be in touch with some Dane who has them, or a member of an expedition who has been there and secured some. No way to get them.

No one, not even Danes, can enter Greenland without a permit from the Danish Crown.

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## THE sailor's crochet—knots, splices, and hitches.

Request:—Where can I procure a book on making knife lanyards and other fancy articles. The lanyards were worn by United States Navy sailors, and some were of very beautiful design. There used to be a store under the Brooklyn Bridge where they made these to order, but they are there no longer. In addition to lanyards other fancy articles were made from small stuff.

—E. F. Porter, Eatontown, N. J.

Reply by Mr. Charles H. Hall:—The next time you are in the city, you might take a walk along Sands Street, Brooklyn, down toward the Navy Yard gate. There used to be a lot of little outfitting stores along there that had all sorts of Navy gear. I haven't seen a proper knife lanyard for a long time but it may be that they are still being manufactured.

For a working lanyard, I used to use cod line, well scrubbed so that it was nice and soft, and turn an eye splice into it to make a bight big enough to go over my head and come about at the opening in my jumper. Then I'd put in a fancy double figure of eight knot for an ornament and finish off with a small eye for the ring on the knife.

A good book on knots and fancy work has just been published on the other side—in Glasgow, I think. It is called "Knots, Splices and Hitches" and it may be obtained from Yachting, 205 East 42nd Street, New York. I think the price is about $2.50.

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## THE archer turns piscator.

Request:—Down here along the Ohio and Kanawha Rivers we do some giging along with our other fishing. I tried this kind of fishing several times, but somehow the idea of sticking a gaff in a fish lying quietly on the bottom in shallow water doesn't exactly appeal to me. Too much like shooting a rabbit sitting. I'd rather kick him out and take my chances at 'em on the run.

Now I've found that if you do the same to a fish he will invariably partially circle the boat before taking off, and this gives you a chance to throw the gig. I've tried this and although I got some fish this way I find that they must be close to the top and darn close to the boat or you won't be able to get enough drive behind the gig to get the gaff in him, so I've generated the idea of using a bow and arrow for this purpose.

I believe a bow for this purpose would have to be short but still have lots of power. Not being able to find one of this kind I've decided to try and make one. Have you ever heard of this being tried before? Do you think it possible? Would the arrow skip, hitting the water at an angle? What kind of wood should I use for the bow? For the arrows? Would you use a long or short arrow? Would it be possible to shoot the arrow with a line attached to retrieve the arrow, or arrow and fish? Can you give me a rough idea of how to make the bow?

Don't be afraid of hurting my feelings—I'm not thin-skinned—and you may save me trouble by telling me my idea is no good.

—Augie Massay, Huntington, W. Va.

Reply by Mr. Earl B. Powell:—Certainly the use of a bow in getting fish is practical and you will find a lot of fun in doing it.

For small fish in the shallows you can use ordinary cheap birch target arrows, and I have killed fish of over a pound with these. For larger fish, I would advise you to make a shaft about four feet long, about nine-sixteenth of an inch at about two-fifths of the way from the head and about three-eighths to seven-sixteenths of an inch diameter at each end. Use no feathers, but a detachable harpoon head, and a line. If you have gigged fish a lot you can figure out how to keep it from

fouling. I used to gig fish a lot down south where I was raised and we used a line to retrieve them. The arrow works on the same principle. Of course you must use a smaller line of hard fish cord.

It would take a book to tell you how to make a bow that would work well. However, write to L. E. Stemmler Co., Queens Village, Long Island, N. Y. and they not only handle supplies of all kinds, but put out a small booklet with the information desired about making a bow. Tell them I sent you.

---

A PROUD yacht, the *Enterprise*, was sold for a song.

Request:—Are the Class J yachts, those that compete for the "America's Cup", so built that they would turn over if too strong a gust of wind hit them or are they balanced by their keel so that the sails would "spill" the wind before they turned over? Are all racing yachts that way?

Where is the crew of a Class J racing yacht during a race? Do they work the ship from the deck or do they work her by means of windlasses from the hold?

Do you know in round figures what is spent in preparing a Class J racing yacht for racing? Do you know where I could get definite information about the cost of the winner of last year's races for the "America's Cup"?

—Douglas Lorimer, Collyer, Kans.

Reply by Mr. A. R. Knauer:—The class J yachts, which have raced for the "America's Cup", are ballasted so that they will not capsize. All racing yachts are not built that way, although by far the greater majority are, the exceptions, being center-boarders.

The new rules which were in effect for the last races caused practically all the work to be done on deck. The cup defender *Enterprise* had so many gadgets operated below deck that this stipulation was insisted on for the later races.

The defender *Enterprise* is currently supposed to have cost about $700,000—and was recently sold to a junk dealer for $5,000.

# The Trail Ahead

**Brings a story of swamp and jungle fighting, of a raw lieutenant and a horse whose slain master had never taught it how to retreat.**

## RIDER OF THE GOLDEN MARE

**A novelette by**

**Major Malcolm Wheeler-Nicholson**

**And**

**A new Young Hardesty story, "The High Trail", by Henry Herbert Knibbs; another instalment of "Submarine Gold", by Commander Ellsberg; a sea story by Jacland Marmur; another Splinter Fleet story by Ray Milholland, and others.**

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**Boxing**—CAPT. JEAN V. GROMBACH, 113 W. 57th St., N. Y. C.

**Canoeing:** *paddling, sailing, cruising, regattas*—EDGAR S. PERKINS, 161 W. Harrison St., Chicago, Ill.

**Coins:** *and medals*—HOWLAND WOOD, American Numismatic Society, Broadway at 156th St., N. Y. C.

**Dogs**—JOHN B. THOMPSON, care of *Adventure.*

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**Globe-trotting and vagabonding**—ROBERT SPIERS-BENJAMIN, 1177 East 15th St., Brooklyn, N. Y.

**Health Building Activities, Hiking**—DR. CLAUDE P. FORDICE, care of *Adventure.*

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**Motor Boating**—GERALD T. WHITE, Montville, N. J.

**Motor Camping**—MAJOR CHAS. G. PERCIVAL, M.D., 152 W. 65th St., N. Y. C.

**Motorcycling**—*regulations, mechanics, racing*—CHARLES M. DODGE, 108 Winthrop Rd., Brookline, Mass.

**Mountain Climbing**—THEODORE S. SOLOMONS, 1350 N. Harvard Blvd., Hollywood, Calif.

**Old Songs**—ROBERT FROTHINGHAM, 995 Pine St., San Francisco, Calif.

**Old-Time Sailoring**—CHAS. H. HALL, 446 Ocean Ave., Brooklyn, N. Y.

**Oriental Magic and Effects**—JULIEN PROSKAUER, 148 Lafayette St., New York, N. Y.

**Rifles, Pistols, Revolvers:** *foreign and American*—DONEGAN WIGGINS, R. F. D. No. 8, BOX 69, Salem, Oregon.

**Shotguns:** *foreign and American makes; wing shooting*—JOHN B. THOMPSON, care of *Adventure.*

★**Skiing and Snowshoeing**—W. H. PRICE, 3436 Mance St., Montreal, Quebec.

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**Stamps**—DR. H. A. DAVIS, The American Philatelic Society, 3421 Colfax Avenue, Denver, Colo.

**Swimming**—LOUIS DEB. HANDLEY, 115 West 11th St., N. Y. C.

**Swords:** *spears, pole arms and armor*—CAPT. R. E. GARDNER, 1354 N. 4th St., Columbus, Ohio.

**Tournament Fly and Bait Casting**—H. B. STANWOOD, East Sullivan, Maine.

**Track**—JACKSON SCHOLZ, Jenkintown, Pa.

**Woodcraft**—PAUL M. FINK, Jonesboro, Tenn.

**Wrestling**—CHARLES B. CRANFORD, School of Education, New York University, Washington Square, New York, N. Y.

**Yachting**—A. R. KNAUER, 2722 E. 75th Pl., Chicago, Ill.

## SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNICAL SUBJECTS

**Anthropology:** *American; north of the Panama Canal; customs, dress, architecture, pottery and decorative arts, weapons and implements, fetishism, social divisions*—ARTHUR WOODWARD, Los Angeles Museum, Exposition Park, Los Angeles, Calif.

**Automobiles and Aircraft Engines:** *design, operation and maintenance*—EDMUND B. NEIL, care of *Adventure.*

**Aviation:** *airplanes, airships, airways and landing fields, contests, aero clubs, insurance, laws, licenses, operating data, schools, foreign activities, publications, parachute gliders*—MAJOR FALK HARMEL, 709 Longfellow St., Washington, D. C.

**Big Game Hunting:** *guides and equipment*—ERNEST W. SHAW, South Carver, Mass.

**Entomology:** *insects and spiders; venomous and disease-carrying insects*—DR. S. W. FROST, Arendtsville, Pa.

**Ethnology:** (**Eskimo**)—VICTOR SHAW, Loring, Alaska.

**Forestry:** *in the United States; national forests of the Rocky Mountain States*—ERNEST W. SHAW, South Carver, Mass.

**Tropical Forestry:** *tropical forests and products*—WM. R. BARBOUR, Chapel Hill, N. C.

**Fur Farming**—FRED L. BOWDEN, 104 Fairview Ave., Binghamton, New York.

**Herpetology:** *reptiles and amphibians*—CLIFFORD H. POPE, care of *Adventure.*

**Marine Architecture:** *ship modelling*—CHAS. H. HALL, 446 Ocean Ave., Brooklyn, N. Y.

**Mining:** *territory anywhere in North America, Mining law, prospecting outfitting; any mineral, metallic or nonmetallic*—VICTOR SHAW, Loring, Alaska.

**Motor Vehicles:** *operation, legislative restrictions and traffic*—EDMUND B. NEIL, care of *Adventure.*

**Ornithology:** *birds; their habits and distribution*—DAVIS QUINN, 3508 Kings College Pl., Bronx, N. Y.

**Photography:** *outfitting, work in out-of-the-way places, general information*—PAUL L. ANDERSON, 36 Washington St., East Orange, N. J.

**Precious and semi-precious stones:** *cutting and polishing of gem materials; technical information*—F. J. ESTEBLIN, 901-902 Shreve Bldg., 210 Post Road, San Francisco, Calif.

**Radio:** *telegraphy, telephony, history, receiver construction, portable sets*—DONALD MCNICOL, 132 Union Road, Roselle Park, N. J.

**Railroads:** *in the United States, Mexico and Canada*—R. T. NEWMAN, 701 N. Main St., Paris, Ill.

**Sawmilling**—HARSENBERG LIEBE, care of *Adventure.*

**Sunken Treasure:** *salvaging and diving*—COMDR. EDWARD ELLSBERG, U. S. N. R., care of *Adventure.*

(Continued on page 124)

# The Story of 2 MEN who NEEDED CASH

DO YOU need money to pay the rent—to meet nagging bills—or to clothe and feed the family? Are you hard up for ready cash and obliged to deny yourself many comforts or even necessities? Are you working for such small wages that you can't make ends meet? Then you will be interested in the experiences of these two men.

## THIS MAN DOUBTED:

He said: "Yes, I am broke. I am really terribly hard up. I haven't a cent of extra money for anything. I wish I knew where to get some. I haven't a bit of faith in anything. I am a failure and my luck is terrible."

## THIS MAN ACTED:

He said: "Yes, I need money. I am tired of penny pinching. Your generous offer sounds good to me. It costs nothing to investigate—I have everything to gain. I am going to send my name and find out just what you have to offer me."

## RUN A LOCAL COFFEE AGENCY

*Wonderful Opportunity to make $60.00 in a week*

I'll help you start at once and back you up to the limit. Here's a bona fide cash-getting idea you may never have heard of before—a unique and utterly different way of getting the cash you need. With my plans I have "saved the day" for hundreds who were at their wits end. Not just another clock punching job . . . no back-breaking labor. Even spare time nets up to $5.00 a day . . . full time up to $60.00 a week. Good opportunities open. You don't require any previous experience and you don't risk any of your own money. Think of being prosperous again. Just send me your name for free facts.

## Have Big Weekly Cash Earnings

If you are tired of slaving for small pay, here's your chance to break away and make big money. You can even start in your spare time—see the business grow—have cash in your pocket—be independent. Think of the joy of being a successful business person in your own locality with big, year 'round earnings of your own. You don't have the usual money risks of a business man. There is no limit to your possibilities. Earnings begin at once, the very first day.

### STARTED PENNILESS

6½ Months later Was worth $1,200 Only six and a half months ago I started with your company without a penny to my name, and today (I just finished my balance) I am worth a little more than $1,200.00. I can hardly believe it myself—such a success in so short a time! But it's the truth. Many a day I made from $15.00 to $20.00 clear profit. Your Happy Hustler, Hans Coordes, Nebr.

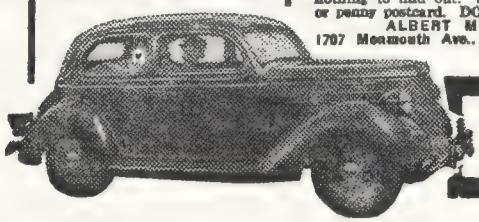
### LOOK AT THESE UNUSUAL EARNINGS

I have a flood of glowing letters from prosperous, successful men and women telling of unusual earnings they have made with my plans. L. P. Boyne, La., made $67.20 in a week. Mrs. H. H. Hosick, Nebr., made $41.75 the first week. Steve Witt, Mo., made $21.50 in a day. Albert Beeker, Mich., $100.00 in a week. George W. Creed, Ohio, $65.00 in a week. Exceptional earnings like these are positive proof of the amazing earning possibilities of my offer.

### SEND NO MONEY—SEND NAME

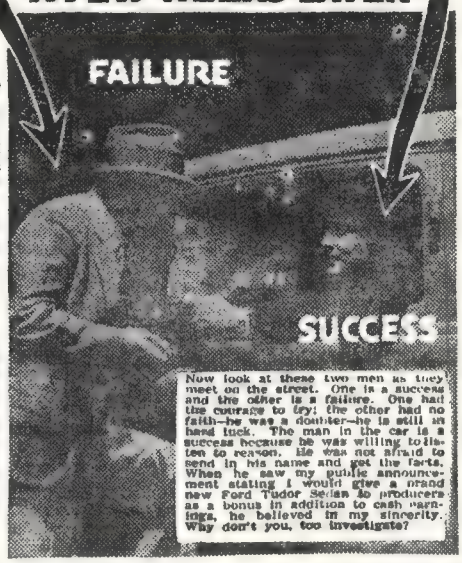
I send everything you need. You positively don't risk a penny of your money. There is nothing complicated or puzzling about my money-making methods. You will be the judge and decide for yourself if the earning possibilities are satisfactory. Just give me a chance to explain the facts. It costs you nothing to find out. Send name on coupon or penny postcard. DO IT NOW!

ALBERT MILLS, Pres.
1707 Monmouth Ave., Cincinnati, Ohio



NEW FORDS Given as a Bonus

## A FEW WEEKS LATER




Now look at these two men as they meet on the street. One is a success and the other is a failure. One had the courage to try; the other had no faith—he was a dentist—he is still in hard luck. The man in the car is a success because he was willing to listen to reason. He was not afraid to send in his name and get the facts. When he saw my public announcement stating I would give a brand new Ford Tudor Sedan to producers as a bonus in addition to cash earnings, he believed in my sincerity. Why don't you, too investigate?

### TEAR OUT — MAIL NOW

Albert Mills, President
1707 Monmouth Ave.
Cincinnati, Ohio

Rush me free facts. Tell me how I can start at once and make up to $60.00 a week with a permanent Coffee Agency of my own. Also send me your Ford Automobile offer. This will not obligate me.

Name.....

Address.....

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(Please Print or Write Plainly)

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ELECTRICITY IN 12 WEEKS AT COYNE

Many Trained Men Earn $30, $40, $50 and Up a Week

... others go in business for themselves and make up to $5000 and more a year.

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— — — H. C. LEWIS, President — — —

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Send Free Book and details of Tuition Financing Plan.

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ADDRESS _____

CITY _____ STATE _____

Mail in envelope or paste on postcard

Fine for Kidney and Bladder Weakness

STOP GETTING UP NIGHTS

Keep your kidneys free from waste matter, poisons and acid, and put healthy activity into kidneys and bladder and you'll live a healthier, happier and longer life.

One most efficient and harmless way to do this is to get from your druggist a 35-cent box of Gold Medal Haarlem Oil Capsules and take them as directed—the swift results will surprise you.

Besides getting up nights, some symptoms of kidney trouble are backache, moist palms, leg cramps, and puffy eyes. If you want real results, be sure to get GOLD MEDAL—the original and genuine—a grand kidney stimulant and diuretic—right from Haarlem in Holland. Give your kidneys a good cleaning once in a while.

"LIBERTY"
10 SHOT
AUTOMATIC 25 CAL.

The smallest size automatic, with largest magazine capacity—10 shots. Side safety; proof tested. $7.95. Vest Pocket 7 Shot Liberty Auto., side safety; proof tested. $7.95. Holster 50c. Box of Cartridges 65c. *Write for catalog of Rifles, Guns, Colts, S. & W. Binoculars, etc. $2 Deposit required on C.O.D.'s*

$7.95

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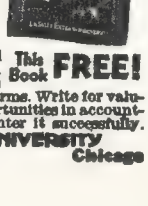
Accountancy Training

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LA SALLE EXTENSION UNIVERSITY
Dept. 6334-H Chicago

(Continued from page 122)

**Taxidermy**—SETH BULLOCK, care of *Adventure.*

**Wildcrafting and Trapping**—RAYMOND S. SPEARS, Inglewood, Calif.

### MILITARY, NAVAL AND POLICE SUBJECTS

**Army Matters:** *United States and Foreign*—CAPT. GLEN R. TOWNSEND, 5511 Cabanne Ave., St. Louis, Mo.

**Federal Investigation Activities:** *Secret Service, etc.*—FRANCIS H. BENT, 251 Third St, Fair Haven, N. J.

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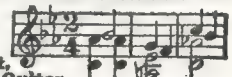

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Royal offers you the most liberal credit terms without any embarrassment! **No red tape — No direct inquiries — No interest or extras.** Just send us your name and address and a few personal facts such as age, occupation, etc. (if possible mention 1 or 2 business references:) All dealings strictly confidential. After 10 DAYS FREE TRIAL — pay the 10 equal, easy monthly payments, stated under each article, without further obligation.

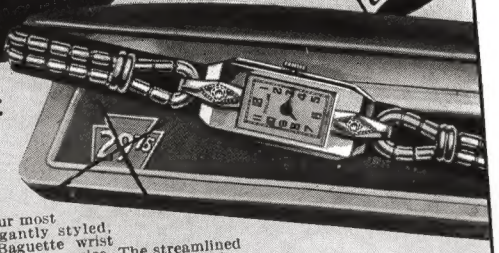
## Written GUARANTEE

Your satisfaction is always assured when you buy at Royal. A written guarantee — fully backed by ROYAL — **America's Largest Mail Credit Jewelers** — accompanies every ring or watch purchased from us giving you absolute protection.

## Send for FREE CATOLOG

**New 32 page "BOOK OF GEMS"**

Hundreds of special values in genuine blue-white diamonds, standard watches, fine jewelry, silverware, cameras, radios and gift novelties. Each fully described and pictured. **Adults send for your copy to-day!**



**2 Diamond BAGUETTE**

**Now only $19.75**

**$1.98 a month**

**LA-1** . . . Now at our most liberal terms! Elegantly styled, modern, genuine Baguette wrist watch at an amazingly low price. The streamlined white, lifetime case is set with 2 brilliant, genuine diamonds and fitted with a fully guaranteed and dependable movement. Smart, link bracelet to match. $29.75 value specially offered at $19.75. **Nothing down — Only $1.98 a month.**

**MEN, Look!!**

**17 Jewel WALTHAM "Diplomat"**

**Now only $24.75**

***Handsome Genuine leather strap included free!***

**LA-2** . . . Where could you duplicate this? Factory guaranteed Famous 17 Jewel WALTHAM "Diplomat" — offered at a sensationally low price. Permanent white case, richly engraved and correct in every detail. Fitted with link bracelet to match and smart, new extra leather strap. By special permission ROYAL now offers this $37.50 value, complete for only $24.75. **No Money Down — only $2.48 a month.**

## NO DEPOSIT-NO C.O.D.-10 MONTHS to PAY!

**Only $27.85 for Both**

**$2.79 a month**

**5 Diamonds**

**LA-3** . . . "LADY DIANE" DUO — exquisitely matched engagement and wedding ring ensemble of beautifully engraved 14K Solid White Gold. The specially selected, dazzling genuine blue-white center diamond in the engagement ring is made even more beautiful by the two brilliant diamonds on each side; the wedding ring is exquisitely engraved to match. **No Money Down—Only $2.79 a month for both complete.**

***America's Largest Mail Order Credit Jewelers***

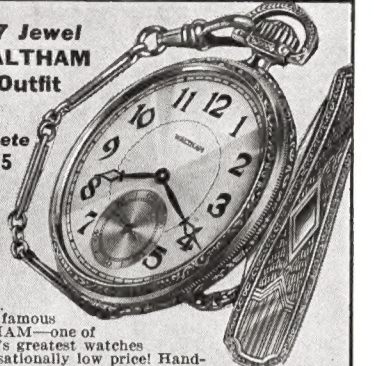
**Only $19.75**

**$1.98 a month**

**LA-4** . . . A smart, modern, square prong engagement ring of high quality at an amazingly low price. The fiery, brilliant genuine blue-white diamond is set in a richly hand engraved and milgrained ring of 14K Solid White Gold. Specially priced at $19.75—During this special "new customer" drive our terms are: **Nothing Down—Only $1.98 a mo.**

**17 Jewel WALTHAM Outfit**

**Complete $19.75**



**LA-5** . . . Another famous WALTHAM—one of America's greatest watches at a sensationally low price! Handsomely engraved 12 size white lifetime case; factory guaranteed, accurate and dependable 17 Jewel WALTHAM movement; complete with engraved knife and chain to match. ALL for $19.75 — **No Money Down — only $1.98 a month.**

# ROYAL DIAMOND & WATCH CO. Inc.

Established 1895

*Address* - DEPT. 150-H

170 BROADWAY N.Y.C.

# FOR DIGESTION'S SAKE—SMOKE CAMELS

**A RARE PLEASURE.** Leisurely diners at Jacques French Restaurant (*above*) enjoy such dishes as Baked Oysters *à la Jacques*. Camels add the final touch to dining. "Camels are most popular here," Jacques himself observes. "They are clearly the favorite with those who know fine living."

**Smoking Camels a Pleasant Way to Ward Off Effects of Worry and Strain on Digestion. Camels Set You Right!**

Modern days are tense. Nerves get "wound up." Hurry, worry, and strain slow up the normal processes of digestion.

Smoking Camels restores the flow of fluids so necessary to good digestion. You sense a comforting "lift" and feeling of well-being.

And you can smoke Camels steadily. The matchless blend of Camel's costlier tobaccos never gets on your nerves or tires your taste.

**THE FLARE** of the welding arc climbs to a temperature of 8700° Fahrenheit! Dan Rafferty, master welder, says: "Smoking Camels during and after meals helps my digestion. Camels taste mild and rich."

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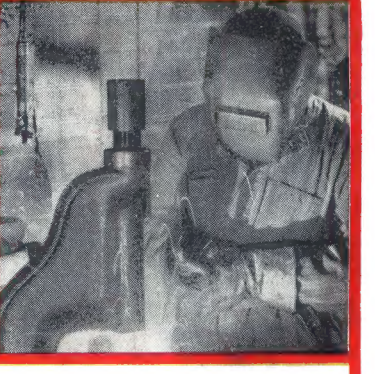

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● **Camels are made from finer, MORE EXPENSIVE TOBACCOS—Turkish and Domestic—than any other popular brand.**